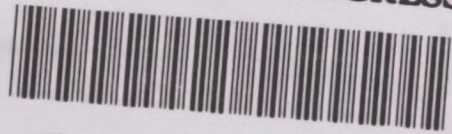




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“AS HE DESCENDED, HE CAUGHT THE SORROWFUL AND TENDER
ACCENTS OF THE WORD ‘FAREWELL.’”

HANS OF ICELAND

BY ✓

VICTOR HUGO

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

HUNTINGTON SMITH

AUG 4 1896

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.

(1833.)

HANS OF ICELAND is a book by a young man, — by a very young man.

One feels in reading it that the lad of eighteen, who in a flush of inspiration wrote *Hans of Iceland* in 1821, was wholly without experience of things, wholly without experience of men, wholly without experience of ideas; and that he sought all this by divination.

Into every intellectual product, — drama, poem, or romance, — three elements enter: what the author has felt, what the author has observed, what the author has imagined.

In romance, especially if it be good, there must be an abundance of feeling and observation; and the imaginative ideas must derive logically and simply, and without break of continuity, from the results of observation and feeling.

Applying this law to *Hans of Iceland*, one is able easily to grasp what constitutes the cardinal defect of the book.

In *Hans of Iceland* one thing only is felt, and that is a young man's love; one thing only is observed, and that a young girl's love. Everything else is imagined, that is to say, invented; for youth, unsupported by facts or experience or examples, reaches ideas only through the imagination. And so, admitting that *Hans of Iceland* is worthy of being classified, it is nothing more nor less than a romance of fantasy.

When the season of exuberance is passed, when thought supplants fancy, when one feels the need of doing something else besides making marvellous stories to frighten old women and little children, when the crudeness of youth has been

modified by contact with life, — then one recognizes that everything in connection with invention, creation, and divination in art must be based upon study, observation, the collection of facts, knowledge, measurement, comparison, serious meditation, and an attentive and continual purpose to keep close to nature and conscientious self-criticism; and inspiration, instead of being hampered, is set free by these new conditions, and derives from them an increased store of vitality and greater capacity for flight. The poet then knows precisely what road he is taking. The floating reveries of his earlier years solidify, so to speak, and become thoughts. This secondary period of life is, for the artist, ordinarily the period when he produces great masterpieces. He is still young and yet mature. Then arrives the most precious time of all, the intermediate and culminating point, the torrid and radiant hour of noon, the moment when shadows are least and light is at the maximum.

Some supreme artists there are who, in spite of the decline of years, are able all their lives to hold to the zenith. These are the men of overtopping genius. Shakespeare and Michael Angelo left upon some of their works the stamp of youth; but the touch of age upon none.

To return to the romance, of which a new edition is here published. Such as it is, — with its disjointed and breathless action, its lack of individuality in character, its barbarous infelicities, its haughty and awkward bearing, its artless intervals of revery, its inharmonious collocation of color, its dry, acrid, unshaded and ungraceful crudeness of style; with all the myriad defects of thoughtless over-action that attend its course, — this book is a fairly adequate representation of the period of life at which it was written, and the peculiar condition of soul, imagination, and heart during adolescence, when one is in love with one's first love; when one transforms the conventional hindrances of life into grand and poetic obstacles; when one's head is filled with heroic and visibly expanding fancies; when one is in two or three respects a man, and

in twenty others yet a child; when at eleven one has read Ducray-Duminil, at thirteen Auguste Lafontaine, at sixteen Shakespeare,—a marvellous and quick-lifting ladder, roughly transferring one's literary affections from the silly to the sentimental, and from the sentimental to the sublime.

And it is because this book, with artlessness as its predominant quality, depicts with some truthfulness the period that brought it forth, that it is again presented to the public in 1833 just as it was written in 1821.

For the rest, since the author, small as may be the place he holds in literature, has undergone the lot of all writers, big and little, of seeing his first works exalted at the expense of his later ones and of hearing the assertion that he is far from having fulfilled the scant promise with which he began, — not wishing to combat a criticism which, perhaps, after all may be well founded, with denials that might savor of self-interest, — he believes it to be his duty to republish frankly and simply his first works, just as he wrote them, in order that his readers may be able to decide for themselves if the steps that separate *Hans of Iceland* from *Notre Dame of Paris* have been steps backward or in advance.

PARIS, *May*, 1833.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE author of this work, from the day when he wrote the first page, up to the hour when he was able to inscribe the grateful word "finis" at the bottom of the last, was the sport of a most ridiculous illusion. Imagining that a literary production in four volumes was worthy of some degree of premeditation, he wasted his time searching for a fundamental idea; in developing it, well or ill, upon a plan good or bad; in arranging his scenes, combining effects, in studying as thoroughly as possible the conditions, — in a word, he took his book seriously.

It is only at this stage of affairs, — at the moment when, in conformity with usage, authors leave off where readers begin, — when he was about to elaborate a long preface, which was to serve as a protecting shield for his book, and to contain, together with an exposition of the literary and moral principles upon which its conception depended, a more or less rapid review of the different historical events involved, and a more or less complete topographical survey of the country where the story is laid; only at this moment, be it repeated, has the author discovered his mistake, recognized the utter insignificance and frivolity of the puppets in whose behalf he has so studiously blackened so much paper, and realized how thoroughly he has, as it were, mystified himself in supposing that this romance could, except in very limited terms, be regarded as a literary production, or that these four volumes would make a book.

He therefore wisely resolved, after making all due apologies, to say nothing more whatever in this preface, which his

publisher will consequently take pains to print in big type. He will not inform the reader either as to his name or his surnames; whether he is young or old, married or single; whether he has made elegies, or fables, or odes, or satires; or whether he desires to make tragedies, or dramas, or comedies; whether he poses as a literary aristocrat in an academy, or whether he holds a position on a newspaper, — and yet all these things would be very interesting, if known. He will simply content himself with observing that the descriptive portions of his romance have been a source of particular solicitude; that those romantic characters, the K's, the Y's, the H's, and the W's, which appear frequently, have really been employed with extreme sobriety, — witness, for instance, the historic name of “Guldenlew,” which several chroniclers write “Guldenloëwe,” and which the author has not dared to venture on; that, moreover, the numerous diphthongs have been varied with much taste and elegance; and, finally, that all the chapters are preceded by strange and mysterious epigraphs, which give a singular interest and a characteristic physiognomy to each division of the book.

January, 1823.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author of this work has been informed that it is absolutely necessary to devote a few lines, by way of advertisement, preface, or introduction, to this second edition. In vain has he pleaded that the four or five unlucky and meaningless pages prefixed to the first edition, and which the publisher has obstinately refused to suppress, have already drawn down the anathemas of one of our most honorable and distinguished writers,¹ who has accused the author of assuming "the sub-acid tone" of the illustrious Jedediah Cleishbotham, schoolmaster and sexton of Gandercleugh parish. In vain has he pleaded that this brilliant and judicious critic, so severe upon the first fault, would doubtless be pitiless at its repetition; in vain has he presented, to put it briefly, a multitude of other reasons, not less good, for avoiding a second fall. It is clear that they must have been met by better ones; for here he is at this moment writing a second preface, after having so deeply repented the writing of the first. When the task was fairly determined upon, he first thought of placing at the forefront of this second edition, what he had not dared to impose upon the first, that is, certain general and particular views regarding the romance. Meditating upon this little literary and didactic treatise, he was still in the all too brief mysterious intoxication of composition, — when the author, thinking to grasp an ideal perfection that is beyond his reach, is thoroughly wrapped up in the progress of his work, — it was, be it repeated, at this

¹ C. Nodier; *Quotidienne*, March 12.

moment of interior ecstasy, when work is a delight and secret intimacy with the Muse seems sweeter far than the dazzling pursuit of glory, — it was then that one of his friends, the wisest of all, came and snatched him rudely from his dreamy abstraction, assuring him that many very eminent, very popular, and very influential men of letters would find the dissertation, which he was maliciously preparing, nothing less than insipid and dull; that the dolorous necessities of criticism, with which these men are charged in divers public prints, imposing upon them the painful necessity of relentlessly pursuing the monster of romanticism and bad taste, they would devote themselves, without a minute's delay, to the preparation for certain impartial and intelligent journals, of a conscientious, logical, and, more than all, a pungent criticism upon the potential dissertation aforesaid. At this terrible warning the poor author —

“*Obstupuit ; steteruntque comae ; et vox faucibus haesit*”¹ —

that is to say, he had no other resource but to leave in the limbo whence he was about to fetch it a dissertation, “*virgin and yet unborn*,” as Jean Baptiste Rousseau has it, upon which criticism so just and implacable was about to sharpen its fangs. His friend advised him to replace it simply with a sort of “*publisher's announcement*,” through which medium he could, with entire decency, say all the pretty little things that tickle so sweetly an author's ears. In fact, numerous models taken from works very much in favor were presented to him. Some of them began with these words: “*The immense and popular success of this work*,” and so on; others started off in this way: “*The European celebrity which this romance has acquired*,” and so on; others declared: “*It is a wholly superfluous task to praise this book, since universal opinion maintains that the most ardent laudation is far beneath its merit*”; and so forth, and so forth. Although

¹ “*Was stupified ; his hair stood up ; and his voice stuck in his throat.*”

these different formulas, according to the discreet counsellor, were not without a certain virtue in their favor, the author of this book did not feel that he was possessed of sufficient paternal humility and indifference to expose his work to the disenchantment and exactions of a reader who had been served with these magnificent apologies; neither did he feel that he had enough effrontery to imitate the travelling mountebanks, who, to stimulate the curiosity of the public, paint a crocodile upon a piece of canvas, and behind it exhibit, to those who have paid their money, nothing but a lizard.

He rejected, therefore, the astonishing idea of sounding his own praises through the mouths of those indulgent gentlemen, his publishers. His friend then suggested, as a sort of passport to his villanous, brigandly island, something that would bring it into the prevailing mode and excite fashionable sympathy, such as delicate pleasantries concerning marquises, bitter sarcasms about priests, and ingenious allusions in regard to nuns, monks, and other monsters of the social order. The author would have asked for nothing better; but, to tell the truth, it did not seem to him that marquises and monks had any very direct relation to the work which he has published. He might, indeed, have borrowed other colors from the same palette, and thrown in here a few philanthropic pages, in which, — always avoiding prudently the dangerous shoals concealed beneath the seas of philosophy and known as the “correctional tribunal,” — he might have brought forward some of the truths discovered by the wise for the glory of man and the consolation of the dying; for instance, that a man is nothing but a brute, that the soul is only a little gas of more or less density, and that God is nothing. But it occurred to him that these incontestable truths were already well known and not of much importance, and that he would be adding barely one scant drop to the deluge of rational morality, atheistic religions, maxims, doctrines, and principles, which inundate us for our happiness after we are thirty years old, with such overwhelming force that one might, if it were

not irreverent to do so, apply to them Régnier's verses upon the storm : —

“ Des nuages en eau tomboit un tel degoust,
Que les chiens altérés pouvoient boire debout.”¹

Moreover, these lofty themes have no very obvious connection with the subject of this book; and the author would have been very much embarrassed in trying to bridge the chasm, in spite of the fact that the art of transition has been singularly simplified, since so many eminent men have discovered the secret of passing without a shock from a market-stall to a palace, and of exchanging without any appearance of incongruity a soldier's fatigue cap for a civic crown.

Realizing, then, his inability to bring forth, either by talent or knowledge, — “by wings or by beak,” as an ingenious Arabian verse has it, — a preface that would be interesting to his readers, the author has determined to offer to them here nothing but a serious and candid account of the corrections that have been made in this second edition.

First of all he desires to say that the term “second edition” is decidedly out of place, and that the title of “first edition” is really applicable to this reprinting, inasmuch as the four unsymmetrical packages of black-and-white spotted grayish paper, which an indulgent public has been kind enough hitherto to accept as the four volumes of *Hans of Iceland*, have been so desecrated with typographical incongruities by a barbarous printer, that the unhappy author, in looking over his unrecognizable offspring, underwent continually the agony which a father might feel on recovering his child, mutilated and tattooed at the hands of the Iroquois of Lake Ontario.

Here the “*esclavage*” (slavery) of suicide became “*usage*” (custom); elsewhere typographical manipulation gave to a “*lien*” (fetter) the voice of a “*lion*”; further on, the moun-

¹ The water fell from the clouds in such a flood,
That the dogs could drink it up, just as they stood.

tain of Dofre-Field was deprived of its "*pics*" (peaks), and furnished with "*pieds*" (feet); and when the Norwegian fishermen undertook to moor their boats in the "*criques*" (inlets), they pushed their craft up on the "*briques*" (bricks). Not to weary the reader, the author will pass over in silence the numerous outrages of this kind that have left their mark upon his embittered memory, —

“Manet alto in pectore vulnus.”¹

Enough to say that there is no grotesque simile, no uncouth meaning, no absurdity of thought, no inconsistency of form, no idle burlesque, that the industrious stupidity of ignorance of this puzzle-devising printer's foreman has not made him express. Any one, alas, who has had occasion in the course of his life to get a dozen lines put into print, were it only a marriage announcement or a burial notice, is aware of the profound bitterness associated with a grief of this kind!

It is therefore with the most scrupulous care that the proofs have been revised for this new impression; and now the author dares to believe, together with one or two of his intimate friends, that the restored romance is worthy of taking its place among the glorious writings, in presence of which “the eleven stars bow down as if in presence of the moon and sun.”²

If the newspaper critics accuse the author of not having revised his text, he will take the liberty of sending to them the proofs of his regenerated book, blackened with the record of microscopic labor, — for it is said there still remain among these gentlemen more than one doubting Thomas.

For the rest, the benevolent reader will observe that numerous dates have been corrected, several historical notes added, and, more particularly, that one or two chapters have been enriched with new epigraphs. In a word, he will find

¹ Deep in his breast remains the wound.

² Alkoran.

on every page changes, the extreme importance of which can only be measured by that of the work itself.

An impertinent adviser desires that the author should place at the foot of his pages translations of all the Latin phrases that Doctor Spiagudry scatters through the volume, for the edification — thus he went on — of certain bricklayers, braziers, and hair-dressers, who edit certain journals, before which *Hans of Iceland* may perhaps come up for judgment. It may easily be imagined with what indignation the author received this insidious advice. He instantly informed the untimely joker that all journalists, without distinction, are perfect luminaries of urbanity, erudition, and good faith; and begged him to have the decency to believe that he was not to be reckoned among the number of those ungrateful citizens who are always ready to address to the censors of taste and genius this malicious verse from an ancient poet, —

“Tenez-vous dans vos peaux et ne jugez personne”;¹

that he, in fact, was far from believing that the “lion’s skin” was not the natural covering of these popular dignitaries.

Still another has exhorted him — for he owes it to his readers to make a clean breast of the whole matter — to put his name upon the title-page of this romance, which up to now has figured as the abandoned child of an unknown father. It must be confessed that, in addition to the satisfaction of seeing the seven or eight Roman letters, making up what they call his name, standing out in handsome black lines on the fine white paper, there is a certain decided charm in the idea of seeing it shine forth in isolation upon the back of the printed cover, as if the work which it enclosed, far from being the only monument of the author’s genius, were only a single column of a stately temple, some day to be the shrine of his immortality, and only an inadequate example of his hidden talent and unpublished glory. That, at the very least, would

¹ Keep to your skins and never judge anybody.

prove an intention to be some day an illustrious and important writer. To triumph over this new temptation, the author has been obliged to fall back upon the fear that he would never be able to struggle through the crowd of scribblers, among whom, even in casting off his anonymity, he would always be "the unknown."

As to the objection that several delicate-eared amateurs have brought forward, touching the barbarous uncouthness of Norwegian names, he considers it to be entirely justifiable; and he proposes, as soon as he shall have been elected to membership in the Royal Society of Stockholm or the Bergen Academy, to suggest to the good-natured Norsemen a change of language, on the ground that the villanous jargon which they are so odd as to employ is an offence to Parisian hearing, and that their grotesque names, as rugged as their cliffs, have upon the sensitive tongues of those who attempt to pronounce them doubtless much the same effect that their bear's oil and bark-bread would have upon the acute and sensitive perceptions of a cultivated palate.

It remains for him to extend his thanks to the eight or ten persons who have had the kindness to read his book entirely through, and who have thus demonstrated the truly prodigious success which it has obtained. He also wishes to express his gratitude to those among his fair readers who, as he is informed, have evolved for themselves out of his book an ideal author for *Hans of Iceland*. He is infinitely flattered when they endow him with red hair, a curly beard, and fiery eyes; he is ashamed to think that they do him the honor of believing that he never trims his nails; but he supplicates them upon his knees not to think for a moment that he carries his ferocity to the extent of devouring little children alive. However, all these details will be determined when his fame has ascended to the level of that of the authors of *Lolotte and Fanfan*, or *Puss in Boots*, — those transcendent creatures, twins in genius and taste, "*arcades ambo*," — and there shall be placed at the head of his works his por-

trait, "*terribiles visu formae*," and his biography, "*domestica facta*."

He was about to close this already too long note when his publisher, at the moment of sending the work to the newspapers, has asked him to prepare a few little notices setting forth its merits, adding, to obviate all possibility of objection on the part of the author, that his "writing will not be made known," and that he — the publisher — will "copy them himself." This last suggestion is really quite touching. Since it is evident that in this epoch every person of distinction feels bound to instruct his neighbor with regard to his capabilities and personal perfections, — matters concerning which no one could be better informed than the wearers of them, — as, moreover, this latest temptation is a sufficiently strong one, the author believes that, in case he should succumb, he ought to warn the public never to take seriously more than half of what the newspapers say about his book.

April, 1823.

HANS OF ICELAND.

CHAPTER I.

Did you see it ? Did you see it ? Did you see it ? Oh, did you see it ?
Who saw it ? Who did see it ? For mercy's sake, who saw it ?—
STERNE: *Tristram Shandy*.

“You see what love leads to, friend Niels. That poor Guth Stersen would never be stretched out on that great black stone, like a starfish cast up by the sea, if she had never thought of anything else but patching up her father's boat, and mending the fish-nets of our old comrade. May St. Usuph, the fisherman, console him in his affliction !”

“And her lover,” put in a shrill and trembling voice ; “Gill Stadt, the fine young man that's close beside her — he wouldn't be there if, instead of making love to Guth and hunting for a fortune in those cursed Røerass mines, he had spent his youth in swinging his younger brother's cradle under the smoky beams of his cottage.”

“Your memory grows old with you, mother Olly,” interrupted neighbor Niels, whom the first speaker had addressed ; “Gill never had a brother, and so the sorrow of poor widow Stadt is all the more bitter, for her cabin is now wholly deserted. When she looks to heaven for help, her eyes light upon the empty cradle, still hanging from the roof, of her child who has grown to a big young man, and is dead.”

“Poor mother,” responded old Olly. “As for the young man, it was his own fault. Why did he turn miner at Røerass ?”

"It's true enough," said Niels, "that those infernal mines rob us of a man for every stiver of copper we get from them. Isn't that so, neighbor Braal?"

"Those miners are fools," replied the fisherman. "Fish don't have to leave the water to make a living, and a man ought not to go underground."

"But," queried a young man in the crowd, "suppose that Gill Stadt was obliged to work in the mines to win a wife?"

"It's not right to risk one's life for a fancy that's not worth the penalty. It's a fine marriage-bed that Gill has made for his Guth."

"Did the girl drown herself in despair at the young man's death?" asked one who stood by.

"Who said that?" cried a soldier, who had just forced his way through the throng. "This young girl, whom I knew very well, was in fact engaged to a young miner, who not long ago was crushed in a blast in one of the lower levels of Storwaadsgrube, near Røerass; but she was also the mistress of one of my comrades, and day before yesterday, when she was trying to steal her way into Munckholm to celebrate the death of her betrothed with her lover, the boat she was in was capsized on a reef, and she was drowned."

A confused medley of voices arose. "That can't be true, master soldier!" exclaimed the old women, while the young ones were silent, and neighbor Niels wickedly reminded Braal, the fisherman, of his former words, "You see what love leads to!"

The soldier was in a fair way to get very angry with his feminine dissentients. He had saluted them as "old witches out of Quiragoth's Cave," and they were showing little disposition to endure patiently so serious an insult, when a strident and imperious voice, crying, "Peace, peace, you crones!" put an end to the discussion. Silence followed, like that which pervades a flock of hens when the master of the feathered harem orders them to be quiet.

Before narrating the scene that followed, it perhaps will

be worth while to describe the place where it occurred. It was — as no doubt the reader has already fancied — one of those melancholy structures consecrated by public pity and social necessity to serve as a last asylum for the unknown dead, whose lives, for the most part, have been anything but happy; a place where the thoughtless sightseer, the cynical or charitable observer, and often the friends and weeping relatives, gather, the latter through long and insupportable anxiety being left with only this deplorable hope. At this distant epoch, and in the comparatively uncivilized country to which I have transported the reader, they had not as yet devised the plan adopted in our dirty, gilded cities, of transforming such places into ingeniously gloomy and elegantly funereal monuments. No light entered there through a tomb-like opening along an artistically sculptured vault, to fall upon a series of resting-places that seem to have been devised to give the dead some of the comforts of the living, and where even the support for the head is shaped like a sleeper's pillow. If the keeper's door stood open, the eye, wearied with the inspection of naked and hideous corpses, could not have the pleasure, as with us, of lighting upon elegant furniture and merry children. Here death appeared in its native ugliness and in all its horror, and no effort had as yet been made to bedeck its grisly form with trinkets and with ribbons.

The room where the present company had gathered was large and dark, and the very darkness made it seem larger than it really was. The only light that entered came through a low, square door opening upon Drontheim quay, and through a rudely contrived opening in the ceiling, whence it descended in pale, wan rays, with rain and hail and snow, according to the weather, upon the dead bodies arranged directly beneath. The room was divided by an iron railing breast-high. The public came in to the first section through the square door, and saw beyond the railing six long pieces of black granite placed in the foreground, side by side. A little side door

gave access to each section, for the keeper and his assistant, whose lodgings were at the rear of the structure, bordering on the sea. The miner and his betrothed lay upon two of these granite beds. Decomposition had already begun to show itself upon the girl's body, in the broad blue and purplish streaks marking the course of the blood-vessels upon her limbs. Gill's features were stern and sombre, but the body was so horribly mutilated that it was impossible to form any opinion regarding the assertion of mother Olly about his physical beauty.

Before these disfigured bodies, and amid the gazing crowd, the conversation previously recorded began again. A tall, gaunt old man, seated, with folded arms and bowed head, upon a rickety stool in the darkest corner of the apartment, and apparently paying no attention to what was going on, suddenly got up and exclaimed, "Peace, peace, you crones!" and walked over and seized the soldier by the arm.

Every one was silent, until the soldier turned and broke into a tremendous outburst of laughter at the sight of this singular personage, whose emaciated face, scanty and uncombed locks, long fingers, and garb of reindeer skin, amply justified the hilarious reception. The women, however, who had been silenced for a moment, began to murmur.

"It's the keeper of the Spladgest.¹ Cursed janitor of the dead! That devil of a Spiagudry! Infernal sorcerer!"

"Peace, crones, peace! If this is your witches' sabbath, hurry to your brooms, or they will fly away from you. Trouble no further this honorable descendant of the mighty Thor." Then Spiagudry, assuming with difficulty an ingratiating grimace, turned to the soldier, and said, "You tell me, my good man, that this miserable woman" —

"The old scoundrel," muttered Olly; "yes, we're all 'miserable women,' because when our bodies fall into his claws he gets a fee of only thirty ascalins, while for the carcass of a worthless man he gets full forty."

¹ The morgue at Drontheim is so called.

"Silence, you witches," exclaimed Spiagudry. "Why, these devils' daughters are like their caldrons; when they're heated, they boil and bubble. Tell me now, sir knight of the sword, did your comrade, who had Guth for his mistress, go and kill himself in despair at losing her?"

At this point the long-restrained explosion burst forth. "Listen to the old sinner, the old pagan," shrieked twenty strident and discordant voices; "how glad he'd be to know that there was one living man the less, that he might get forty ascalins for the body!"

"And if that be true," responded the keeper of the Spladgest, "has not our gracious king and master, Christiern V., whom St. Hospitius bless, proclaimed himself the born protector of all miners, that when they die he may enrich his royal treasury with their pitiful heritage?"

"You do too much honor to the king," responded Braal, the fisherman, "to compare the royal treasury to the strong box of your charnel-house, and him to you, neighbor Spiagudry."

"Neighbor!" said the keeper, offended with so much familiarity. "Your neighbor! Say rather your host; for it may very well be some day, my fine boat propeller, that I shall have you for a week as the tenant of one of my six stone beds. And yet," he added with a laugh, "if I spoke of the soldier's death it was simply because I wanted to see an old custom perpetuated,—that of committing suicide as a sequel to the noble and tragic passions which these ladies have the privilege to inspire."

"Oh, come now, corpse-like keeper of corpses," said the soldier; "what are you trying to get at, with that amiable grin of yours, which looks more than anything else like a gallows-bird's last smile?"

"Well said, my fine fellow," responded Spiagudry. "I always thought that there was more clever wit under the helmit of soldier Thurn, who lays out the devil with sword and tongue, than under the mitre of Bishop Isleif, who wrote

the history of Iceland, or under the four-cornered hat of Professor Shœnning, the memorialist of our cathedral."

"In that case, if you will be advised by me, old leather-sack, you will give up your charnel-house fees, and sell yourself as a curiosity to the viceregal museum at Bergen. I swear to you, by St. Belphegor, that they would pay your weight in gold for such a rare specimen of animal as you are. But tell me, what do you want with me?"

"When the bodies brought here have been taken from the water, we are obliged to give up half the fees to the fishermen. I only wanted to beg of you, illustrious and soldierly descendant of the house of Thurn, to get your unfortunate comrade not to drown himself, but to choose some other method of death. It ought to be a matter of indifference to him; and he would not wish, in his last moments, to wrong the unfortunate Christian to whose tender mercies his corpse will be consigned, — if, indeed, the loss of Guth will really drive him to a deed so desperate."

"That's where you deceive yourself, my beneficent and hospitable keeper. My comrade will not have the pleasure of being received in your cheerful six-bedded tavern. Does it occur to you that he may already have consoled himself with another charmer for the death of this one? Why, by my beard, he was weary of your Guth full long ago."

At this speech, the storm that Spiagudry had momentarily drawn upon his own head returned to burst with intensified force upon the unfortunate soldier.

"What, you wretched scoundrel," shrieked the old women, "is this the way you forget us? To think that we should love such worthless beasts!"

The younger women continued to keep silence. Some of them even thought, in spite of themselves, that the offender was after all a pretty good-looking fellow.

"Oho," said the soldier, "are we celebrating the witches' sabbath? Beelzebub has devised a frightful penance, if he has condemned us to listen once a week to such a chorus as this!"

It would be impossible to say how long this new commotion would have lasted, if at this moment the general attention had not been attracted by a tumult outside. The noise increased as it drew nearer; and soon a swarm of small, half-naked boys rushed headlong into the Spladgest, surrounding a covered stretcher borne by two men.

"Where does this come from?" said the keeper to the carriers.

"From the Urchtal sands."

"Oglypiglap!" shouted Spiagudry.

One of the side-doors opened, and a little Laplander, clad in leather, appeared and signed to the carriers to follow him. Spiagudry went with them; and the door closed before the inquisitive crowd had time to conclude, from the length of the corpse upon the stretcher, whether it was that of a man or a woman.

This subject was still under consideration when Spiagudry and his second assistant reappeared in the further room, carrying the body of a man, which they deposited on one of the granite slabs.

"It's many a day since I've touched fine clothes like that," said Oglypiglap; then standing on tiptoe, and stretching up his head, he hung above the body a captain's handsome uniform. The head of the corpse was disfigured, and the other members covered with blood. The keeper rinsed it off several times, from a leaky old pail.

"By St. Beelzebub!" the soldier exclaimed, "that's an officer from my regiment. Let's see, perhaps it's Captain Bollar, from grief at the loss of his uncle. No, that can't be; he's the heir. Is it Baron Randmer? He risked his estate at cards yesterday; but to-morrow he'll get it back, and win his opponent's castle. Is it perhaps Captain Lory, whose dog was drowned? or Paymaster Stunck, whose wife is unfaithful? But really, I don't see any reason why either of these should have blown out his brains."

The crowd was all the time getting larger; and at this

moment a young man passing along the quay, catching sight of the gathering of people, dismounted from his horse, handed the reins to the servant who followed him, and entered the Spladgest. He wore the unassuming garb of a traveller, carried a sword, and was wrapped in a large green cloak. A black plume, fastened to his hat with a diamond buckle, fell down in front of his imposing face, and waved back and forth above his high forehead, which was shaded with long chestnut hair. His mud-bespattered boots and spurs proclaimed that he had come from a distance.

As he entered, a short, stout man, also wearing a cloak and with big gauntlet gloves upon his hands, said to the soldier, —

“Who told you that he killed himself? This man has no more committed suicide, I warrant, than the roof of your cathedral has set fire to itself.”

As the twibil makes two wounds, so this utterance prompted two replies.

“Our cathedral,” said Niels, “is now being covered with copper. It was that miserable Hans, so ’tis said, who set it on fire to give work to the miners; and one of them was his special favorite, Gill Stadt, lying here before you.”

“The devil you say,” exclaimed the soldier; “do you dare to tell me, second arquebusier in the Munckholm garrison, that this man did not blow his brains out?”

“The man was assassinated,” said the little man coldly.

“Just listen to the oracle! See here, your little gray eyes can see no more clearly than your hands can, covered as they are with big gloves in midsummer.”

A flash of light shot from the eyes of the small man. “Soldier,” said he, “beseech your patron saint that these hands do not some day leave their imprint on your face.”

“Oh, let us get outside,” shouted the soldier, crimson with anger. Then suddenly checking himself, he added, “No, we must not speak of duelling in the presence of the dead.”

The little man muttered a few words in a strange tongue and disappeared.

"'Twas on the Urchtal sands they found him," said a voice.

"On Urchtal sands?" said the soldier. "Captain Dispolsen was to land there this morning, on his way from Copenhagen."

"Captain Dispolsen has not yet arrived at Munckholm," said another voice.

"'Tis said that Hans of Iceland is really wandering about that shore," suggested a fourth.

"If that is the case, possibly this man is the captain," said the soldier, "if Hans is the murderer; for every one knows that the Iclander kills in such a devilish manner that his victims often have the appearance of having committed suicide."

"What sort of a man is this Hans?" asked one.

"He is a giant," said another.

"He is a dwarf," said still another.

"And no one has ever seen him?" the first voice went on.

"Those who see him for the first time, see him also for the last."

"Hush!" said old Olly; "there are only three persons, 'tis said, who have ever exchanged human speech with him, — this rascally Spiagudry, the widow Stadt, and — but he had a sorrowful life and a sorrowful death — poor Gill, you see there. Hush!"

"Hush!" was repeated on all sides.

"Now," suddenly exclaimed the soldier, "I am sure, of a truth, that this is Captain Dispolsen. I recognize the steel chain that our prisoner, old Schumacker, gave him at his departure."

"You are confident that this is Captain Dispolsen?" asked the young man with the black plume, breaking the silence.

"Sure, by the virtues of St. Beelzebub!" responded the soldier.

The young man quickly went out. "Get a boat for Munckholm," said he to his servant.

"But, my lord, what about the general?"

“Take the horses to him. I shall go to-morrow. Am I my own master or not? Be spry; it is getting late, and I am in a hurry, — a boat.”

The valet obeyed, and for some time kept his eyes upon his young master, as the latter put off from the shore.

CHAPTER II.

I will sit by, the while, so thou wilt tell
Some moving story, to beguile the time.

MATURIN: *Bertram.*

THE reader is already aware that we are at Drontheim, one of the four principal cities of Norway, although not the residence of the viceroy. At the period when these events occurred, that is, in 1699, the kingdom of Norway was still a part of Denmark, and was governed by viceroys, whose headquarters were at Bergen, a larger and more southern city, and a handsomer, than Drontheim, in spite of the vulgar nickname given to it by the celebrated Admiral Van Tromp.

Drontheim has a very inviting aspect to any one ascending the bay, to which the city gives its name. The harbor, which is of considerable size, although vessels cannot easily gain an entrance under certain conditions of wind and tide, presented at this time the appearance of a long canal, bordered on the right by Danish and Norwegian, and on the left, in accordance with the regulations, by foreign ships. The city stands upon a well-cultivated plain, surmounted by the lofty spires of its cathedral. This church is one of the finest examples of Gothic architecture, as may be easily judged from the book by Professor Shœnning, so learnedly referred to by Spiagudry, which describes it as it was before frequent fires had devastated its charms, and when it bore upon its main spire the Episcopal cross, proclaiming it to be the cathedral of the Lutheran bishopric of Drontheim. Above the city, in the purple distance, one could see the white, sharpened peaks of the Kole mountains, standing up like the pointed florets of an antique crown.

In the middle of the harbor, about a cannon-shot from shore, the solitary fortress of Munckholm stood, upon a mass of rocks amid the dashing waves. It was a sombre prison, which at this time contained an inmate who had become celebrated by the brilliancy of his continued prosperity and his sudden downfall.

Schumacker, a man of lowly birth, had been loaded with favors by his master, then dragged down from his place as grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway to the traitor's seat, thence hauled to the scaffold, and from there, through royal clemency, cast into an isolated dungeon on the extreme verge of the two kingdoms. He had been pulled down by creatures of his own making, and could not justly proclaim them as ingrates. What right had he to complain, if the ladder which he had lifted so high, only for his own advantage, broke beneath his feet?

From the depths of his exile he, who had established the nobility of Denmark in their places, saw his own honors divided among those whom he had made. His mortal enemy, the Count of Ahlefeld, succeeded him in the grand chancellorship; General Arensdorf, as grand marshal, had the control of military assignments; and Bishop Spollyson performed the functions of inspector of universities. The only one among his enemies who was not indebted to him for advancement was Count Ulric Frederic Guldenlew, natural son of King Frederic III., viceroy of Norway; and he was the most generous of them all.

Towards the gloomy rocks of Munckholm the boat containing the man with the black plume was slowly making its way. The sun was sinking rapidly behind the lonely fortress, and cast its horizontal rays upon the structure so directly, that the peasant on the distant western hills of Larsynn could see the undefined shadow of the sentinel on the highest turret of Munckholm, moving beside him along the heath.

CHAPTER III.

Alas, my heart could not be more acutely wounded! This ill-conditioned fellow has dared to look upon her, and sully her purity with his gazing! Claudia! I am beside myself at the very thought! — LESSING.¹

“ANDREW, let it be known that in half an hour the curfew will be sounded. Sorsyll will relieve Duckness at the portcullis, and Maldivius will stand guard on the platform of the main tower. See that close watch is kept on the Lion of Schleswig donjon. Don’t forget to fire the seven o’clock gun for the raising of the harbor chain, — but no, Captain Dispolsen is still awaited, so take care to have the signal lighted, and see that the one on Walderhog is lit according to the orders already given. Above all, don’t fail to have refreshments ready for the captain; and — I was near forgetting — give Toric Belfast, second arquebusier of the regiment, two days in solitary; he has been absent since morning.”

Thus spoke the sergeant-at-arms, under the black, smoke-stained arches of Munckholm guard-house, which occupies the lower tower, overlooking the castle’s outer gate. The soldiers to whom he had given orders left their games and their beds to carry out his directions, and silence followed. A moment later the measured, alternating throb of oars was heard without.

“Here comes Captain Dispolsen, at last,” said the sergeant, opening the little barred window which looked out on the bay. A boat was approaching the foot of the iron gate.

“Who goes there?” called the sergeant in a husky voice.

“Open!” was the response; “peace and security.”

“The public is not allowed to enter. Have you a permit?”

¹ *Emilia Galotti.*

“Yes.”

“I’m coming to find out. If you are lying, then, by the virtues of my patron saint, you shall have a drink of seawater.” Then closing the wicket and turning away, he added, “It was not the captain, after all.”

A light appeared behind the iron gateway, the rusty bolts creaked, the bars were raised, the gate swung open, and the sergeant scrutinized the writing offered by the newcomer.

“You can pass,” he said. “Stop a minute, though,” he added brusquely; “leave your hat-buckle outside. No one is allowed to enter a state prison wearing jewels. The regulations are that ‘the king and members of the royal family, the viceroy and members of the viceregal family, the bishop, and garrison commanders are alone excepted.’ You don’t come under any one of those privileged classes, do you?”

Without replying, the young man unfastened the prohibited buckle, and tossed it as a guerdon to the fisherman who had brought him; and the fellow, fearing that such generosity might be repented of, hastened to put a wide space of water between benefactor and recipient.

While the sergeant, grumbling at the imprudence of the chancellor’s office in distributing passes so recklessly, was replacing the heavy bars, and slowly and noisily climbing the winding staircase back to the guard-room, the young man, after having thrown his cloak over his shoulder, passed quickly through the dark archway of the lower tower, crossed the parade ground, and went along by the artillery shed, at which point he was warned by an imperious order from the sentinel to keep away from certain old dismounted culverins, which may to-day be seen at the Copenhagen museum. He arrived at the portcullis, which was lifted when his pass had been inspected. Then, followed by a soldier, he took his course in a diagonal direction, without hesitation and after the manner of one to whom the place was familiar, over one of the four square courtyards which flank the main circular court, in the midst of which rises the great rounded rock, on

which at this time stood the tower called Lion of Schleswig castle, because Rolf the Dwarf had once imprisoned there his brother, Jotham the Lion, Duke of Schleswig.

It is not our intention to give here a description of Munchholm's famous donjon, more particularly because the reader, thus entrapped in a state prison, might perhaps fear that he would not be able "to escape by way of the garden." He would be in the wrong; for the Lion of Schleswig castle, reserved for prisoners of note, afforded them, among other advantages, that of a promenade in a sort of wild garden, by no means small, where clumps of holly, several aged yew trees, and a number of black pines grew from the rocks about the lofty prison and inside the enclosure of great walls and enormous towers.

Reaching the foot of the rounded rock, the young man proceeded to ascend a series of rudely cut steps, leading in zigzag fashion to the foot of one of the outer towers, which was pierced by a postern in its lower part, and so gave entrance to the donjon. There he blew loudly on a copper horn, which the keeper of the portcullis had given him.

"Open, open!" called a voice from within; "no doubt it's that cursed captain!"

As the postern opened, the visitor could see into an ill-lighted Gothic apartment, where a young officer was lying in a careless attitude on a pile of cloaks and reindeer skins, close by one of those three-burnered lamps which our ancestors were wont to suspend from their mullioned ceilings, and which for the time being had been placed upon the floor. The luxurious and even excessively elaborated elegance of his costume was in vivid contrast with the nakedness of the apartment and the rudeness of the furniture; he held a book in his hand, and half turned toward the newcomer.

"The captain, is it? Glad to see you, captain! You didn't think, did you, that you were to meet a man who had not the pleasure of your acquaintance; but that difficulty will soon be got over, is it not so? To begin with, accept my profound

condolences upon your return to this ancient castle. Short as is the time that I have sojourned here, I am getting to be as frisky as the owl fastened above the donjon gate as a scarecrow; and when I return to Copenhagen, to attend my sister's wedding-feast, it's odds of four to a hundred that the ladies won't recognize me! Tell me, do they still wear knots of pink ribbon at the bottom of the waistcoat? Have any new romances of the French woman, the *Demoiselle Scudéry*, been translated? This is *Clélie* that I have here; I suppose it is still read at Copenhagen. It serves as a sort of lover's missal for me, now that I sigh in exile remote from so many enchanting glances; for, enchanting as they are, the eyes of our young prisoner — you know to whom I refer — say nothing at all to me. Ah, if it were not for my father's commands! I must tell you in confidence, captain, that my father — pray never mention it — charged me to — you understand — make up to Schumacker's daughter. But all my efforts go for nothing, for this pretty statue is not a woman. She is always weeping, and never looks at me."

The young man, who had thus far not been able to break in upon the officer's excessive volubility, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What! What are you saying? Charged with the seduction of the unfortunate Schumacker's daughter?"

"Seduction? Well, yes, if that's what they call it at Copenhagen in these days; but I'd stump the very devil to do it. Day before yesterday, when I was on duty, I took the trouble to carry her a magnificent French strawberry, which had been sent to me clear from Paris. Will you believe me when I tell you that she didn't even lift her eyes to look at me, although I crossed her room three or four times, clinking my new spurs, which have rowels as big as a Lombardy ducat? — That's the newest idea, is it not?"

"Good Lord! Good Lord!" exclaimed the young man, striking his forehead. "This is past belief!"

"Is it not?" responded the officer, misunderstanding the

import of the other's exclamation. "Not the least attention to me! It's incredible, and yet it's true."

The young man walked back and forth in extreme agitation, with long, quick strides.

"Will you have some refreshments, Captain Dispolsen?" the officer asked loudly.

The young man came to himself, and answered, "I am not Captain Dispolsen."

"What!" said the officer in a stern voice, and sitting upright; "who are you, then, that you dare to come here at this hour?"

"I wish to see Count Griffenfeld," said the young man, showing his passport, "that is to say, to see your prisoner."

"The count, the count!" the officer murmured with an offended air. "But, after all, the pass is correct enough. Here is the signature of Vice-Chancellor Grummond de Knud. 'The bearer is authorized to visit all the royal prisons, at any hour and at any time.' Grummond de Knud is brother to old General Levin de Knud, commandant at Drontheim, and you are probably aware that the old general brought up my future brother-in-law."

"Thanks for these details about your family, lieutenant. Do you not think that you have supplied me with sufficient information of that kind?"

"The impertinent fellow is right," said the lieutenant, biting his lips. "Here, usher! Usher of the tower! Take this stranger to Schumacker, and don't grumble because I unhooked your three-burnered, single-wicked lamp. I was not sorry to have a close look at an article which doubtless dates back to Skjold the Pagan, or Havar the Cleaver, — and more than that, it's not the custom to hang anything but crystal chandeliers from the ceiling."

So saying, the martyr to fashion took up the interrupted progress of the gallant adventures of the Amazonian Clélie and the one-eyed Horatius, while the young man and his escort were crossing the deserted garden of the donjon keep.

CHAPTER IV.

Mercutio. Where the devil should this Romeo be?

Benvolio. Not to his father's; I spoke with his man. — SHAKESPEARE.¹

WHILE these events were passing, a man with two horses had entered the courtyard of the governor's palace at Drontheim. He had dismounted, shaking his head in a discontented way, and was on the point of taking the two beasts to the stable, when some one seized him roughly by the arm, and a voice exclaimed, —

“What! You are here alone, Poël? And your master? Where is your master?”

This was old General Levin de Knud, who, having perceived the young man's attendant and the empty saddle from his window, had quickly descended the stairs, and fixed upon the valet a glance that betrayed even more disquietude than his question.

“Excellency,” said Poël, with a low bow, “my master is no longer in Drontheim.”

“What! He has been here, then? He has gone away without seeing and embracing his old friend, the general? When was he here?”

“He came and went this very afternoon.”

“This afternoon! This afternoon! But where was he stopping? Where has he gone?”

“He alighted at the Spladgest, and took a boat for Munckholm.”

“Ah, I thought him at the antipodes. But why has he gone to the fortress? What was he doing at the Spladgest?”

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, act ii., scene iv. In Hugo's version the names of the interlocutors are transposed.

What a knight-errant he is! But it's my fault in part, for why did I bring him up in that way? In spite of his rank, I wanted him to have individual freedom."

"That's the reason why he's not a slave to etiquette," said Poël.

"No; but he is of his own caprices. Well, well; no doubt he will return. You'll find food and drink awaiting you, Poël. Tell me,"—and the general's face took on an expression of solicitude,—“tell me, Poël, have you been travelling about a good deal?”

"We came by the direct road from Bergen, general. My master seemed sad."

"Sad? Has something occurred between him and his father? Was he displeased about the marriage?"

"I can't say, but I hear that his serene highness is immovable."

"Immovable! You say, Poël, that the viceroy is immovable! But, in that case, Ordener must have refused consent."

"I can't say as to that, excellency. He seemed sad."

"Sad! Do you know how his father received him?"

"The first time,—it was in camp near Bergen,—his serene highness said, 'I do not see you very often, my son.'—'All the better for me, my lord and father,' my master replied, 'if you are conscious of it.' Then he told his serene highness about his travels in the North, and his serene highness said, 'Very well.' The next day my master returned from the palace, and said, 'They want me to marry; but I must see my foster-father, General Levin.' I saddled the horses, and here we are."

"Yes, yes, my good Poël," said the general in a different tone; "he called me his foster-father?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Woe to me, then, if this marriage displeases him; for I would rather undergo the king's disapproval than to have any hand in it. But think of it,—the daughter of the grand chancellor of the two kingdoms! By the way, Poël, does

Ordener know that his future mother-in-law, the Countess of Ahlefeld, has been here incognito since yesterday, and that the count is expected?"

"I don't know, general."

"Oh, yes," said the old governor; "he must know it, otherwise why did he beat a retreat so quickly after his arrival?"

Then the general, with a friendly gesture toward Poël, and saluting the sentinel, who presented arms, returned to the palace, as disturbed in mind as he had been when he came forth.

CHAPTER V.

It seemed as if his heart had been torn by all the passions, and had been left desolate. All that remained to him was the sad and piercing glance of one who had attained the summit of human knowledge, and who could at a look predict the tendency of all things. — SCHILLER: *The Visions*.

WHEN the stranger had ascended the spiral staircases, and traversed the upper halls of the Lion of Schleswig donjon, and the usher had opened for him the door of the apartment he was seeking, the first words that fell upon his ears were once more these: "Is it at last Captain Dispolsen?"

He who asked this question was an old man, sitting with his back toward the door, with his elbows leaning upon a writing-table, and his head held in his hands. He wore a black woollen gown. Above a bed, at one side of the room, was a broken shield, around which were hung the broken collars of the orders of the Elephant and of Dannebrog. Below the shield was fastened a count's coronet reversed; and the two parts of a hand of justice, tied together cross-fashion, completed this extraordinary collection of decorations. The old man was Schumacker.

"No, my lord," responded the usher; then he said to the stranger, "Here is the prisoner"; and leaving them together he closed the door, before hearing the old man's shrill voice in protest: "If it's not the captain, I do not wish to see any one."

Hearing these words, the stranger paused near the door, and the prisoner, believing himself alone, — for he had not turned around, — fell again into silent revery. All at once he exclaimed: "The captain has certainly forsaken and betrayed me! Men, — why, men are like the bit of ice that

the Arab took for a diamond. He put it carefully away in his wallet, and when he looked for it he found not even a drop of water."

"I am not to be reckoned with such men," said the stranger."

"Who is here listening to me?" said Schumacker, quickly rising. "Is it some wretched hireling of Guldenlew's?"

"Do not speak evil of the viceroy, my lord count."

"My lord count! Is it to flatter me that you address me thus? Your trouble goes for naught. I am devoid of power."

"He who speaks to you never knew you in your power, and yet is not the less your friend."

"It must be that he still hopes to get something from me. The extent of the remembrance that one has of the unfortunate is always measured by the hopes that one has of what they may still be able to do."

"It is I who have the right to complain, noble count, for I remember you and you have forgotten me. I am Ordener."

A look of joy came into the mournful eyes of the old man, and a smile which he could not suppress parted his white beard, like a ray of sunshine coming through a cloud.

"Ordener! You are welcome, Ordener, the wanderer. May happiness a thousand times attend the traveller who remembers the prisoner!"

"Is it true, then," asked Ordener, "that you had forgotten me?"

"I had forgotten you," said Schumacker, resuming his sombre expression, "as we forget the breeze that revives us and passes on, happy to think that it does not become a whirlwind to destroy us."

"Then you did not reckon upon my return, Count of Griffenfeld?" said the young man.

"Old Schumacker did not reckon upon it; but there is a young girl here who reminded me, this very day, that on the eighth of last May you had been away a year."

Ordener started. "Great heavens, can it be," he said, "that it was your Ethel, count?"

"Who else?"

"Your daughter, my lord, has deigned to count the months since my departure? Oh, how many melancholy days I have passed! I have seen the whole of Norway, from Christiania to Wardhus, but I was on my way to Drontheim all the time."

"Make use of your liberty, young man, while it is yours to enjoy. But tell me frankly who you are. I should be glad to know you, Ordener, by some other name. The son of one of my deadliest enemies is called Ordener."

"Perhaps, my lord, this deadly enemy has more good will toward you than you have toward him."

"You elude the question; but keep your secret. I might perhaps learn that the fruit that quenches thirst is the poison that will kill me."

"Count!" said Ordener in an irritated tone. "Count!" he repeated, with an accent of reproach and pity.

"Am I under any obligation to confide in you," responded Schumacker, "when you never fail in my presence to take the part of the relentless Guldenlew?"

"The viceroy," the young man solemnly intervened, "has just commanded that in the future you shall be at liberty, and free from the supervision of the guards, within the Lion of Schleswig donjon. I learned the news at Bergen, and no doubt you will speedily receive an official notification."

"It is a favor that I did not dare to hope for, and I believed that I never had spoken of this wish of mine to any one but you. It is kind of them to diminish the weight of my fetters as that of my years increases. When my infirmities shall have rendered me helpless, they will doubtless say to me, 'You are free.'" At these words the old man smiled bitterly, and added, "And you, young man, do you continue to have your crazy ideas about independence?"

"If it were not for those same crazy ideas, I should not be here."

"How did you come to Drontheim?"

"Why, on horseback."

"And how did you get to Munckholm?"

"In a boat."

"Poor, crazy fellow! He thinks himself free, and jumps from a horse's back into a boat. It is not your own limbs that carry out your wishes; it is an animal, a lump of matter, — and yet you call that having your own way!"

"I make others obey me."

"To maintain toward others the right of being obeyed is to give others the right of commanding you. Independence is only to be found in solitude."

"You are not an admirer of the human race, noble count?"

The old man laughed mirthlessly. "I weep at being a man, and I laugh at those who offer me consolation. You will learn, if you are ignorant of it now, that misfortune engenders suspicion, as prosperity brings forth ingratitude. But tell me, since you come from Bergen, what especial favors have fallen to the lot of Captain Dispolsen? Something very fortunate must have happened to him, since he has forgotten me."

"Dispolsen, my lord count?" said Ordener, in gloomy embarrassment; "it is to speak of him I come to you to-day. I know that he had your entire confidence."

"You know?" interrupted the prisoner anxiously. "You are mistaken. I give my confidence to no one. Dispolsen, it is true, has the care of my papers — of my most important papers. To serve me he went to Copenhagen, to see the king. I am quite willing to admit that I expected more from him than from any one else, for in the time of my power I never rendered him a single benefit."

"Well, noble count, I saw him to-day" —

"Your confusion tells me the rest; he is a traitor."

"He is dead."

"Dead!" The prisoner folded his arms and bent his head; then, lifting his eyes to the young man's face, he

added: "And yet I was just saying that something fortunate had happened to him!"

Then he turned his glance toward the wall, where hung the insignia of his banished glory, and made a gesture as if to dismiss the witness of the grief he was striving to overcome.

"'Tis not for him I mourn; it means only one man the less. It is not for myself; what have I to lose? But my daughter, my unfortunate daughter! I shall be the victim of this infamous plot, and what will become of her if her father is taken from her?" He turned quickly towards Ordener. "How did he die? Where did you see him?"

"I saw him at the Spladgest. They do not know whether he killed himself or was murdered."

"It is important to know that. If he was assassinated, I know whence the blow came; in that case all is lost. He was bringing to me evidences of the plot that they are hatching against me. That evidence might have saved me and destroyed them. They have blotted it out, indeed! My poor Ethel!"

"My lord count," said Ordener, with a salute, "I shall be able to tell you to-morrow whether or not he was murdered."

Schumacker, without replying, followed Ordener, as he went out, with a glance expressive of the calmness of despair — an expression far more awful than the calmness of death.

Ordener stood in the unoccupied antechamber, without knowing which way to direct his steps. It was well into the evening, and the room was dark. He opened a door at random, and found himself in an immense corridor lighted only by the moon in her rapid course among the flitting clouds. The misty radiance fell at intervals through the narrow, lofty windows, and sketched upon the opposite wall a long procession of ghostly figures, that followed one another in rapid sequence amid the obscurity of the gallery. The young man solemnly made the sign of the cross, and advanced toward a rosy light, which shone indistinctly at the extremity of the corridor.

A door was partly open; a young girl was kneeling in a Gothic oratory at the foot of an unpretentious altar, and was reciting in an undertone the litany to the Virgin — that simple and sublime orison, in which the soul, aspiring to the sympathy of the Sorrowing Mother, prays only that it may be permitted to pray.

The young girl was clad in black crêpe and white gauze, as if to bear witness to the world that her life up to that time had been compounded of innocence and sorrow. Even in this unassuming attitude, her appearance proclaimed her to be a person of exceptional qualities. Her eyes and her long hair were black, very rare attributes in a northern beauty. Her glance, directed to the vaulted roof, seemed to be radiant with ecstasy, rather than dimmed in self-communion. She was like some vestal from the borders of Cyprus or the fields of Tiber, clad in the romantic garb of an Ossianic maiden, and prostrate before the wooden cross and stone altar of the Christ.

Ordener trembled and drew back; he recognized the kneeling girl. She prayed for her father, for the mighty fallen, for the aged captive abandoned, and she recited in clear tones the psalm of deliverance. She prayed for some one else, but Ordener did not hear the name of the one for whom she prayed. He did not hear it, because she did not utter it. She only recited the song of the Sulamite, of the wife waiting for the husband, and the return of the well-beloved.

Ordener withdrew along the corridor, out of respect for the person and the occasion. Prayer is a great mystery; and his heart, in spite of himself, was filled with an unfamiliar emotion, that had in it more of earth than heaven.

The door of the oratory was closed softly. In a moment a white-clad woman, carrying a light, came toward him through the darkness. He paused, a prey to the most violent perturbation he had ever experienced, and leaned against the wall. His strength left him, his limbs trembled convulsively, and in the silence that surrounded him the beating of his heart

echoed loudly in his ears. As the young girl passed, she heard the rustle of a garment and the gasp of short and hurried breathing.

"Oh, heavens!" she cried.

Ordener sprang forward. With one arm he supported her, and with the other sought vainly to catch the lamp, which fell from her grasp and was extinguished.

"It is I," he said softly.

"It is Ordener!" said the young girl, for the echo of a voice which she had not heard for more than a year was still in her ears. A flash of moonlight lit up the joyful expression in her charming face. Then she recovered herself, in timidity and confusion, and slipped from the young man's arms.

"It is Lord Ordener."

"It is he, Countess Ethel."

"Why do you call me countess?"

"Why do you call me Lord Ordener?"

The young girl was silent, but she smiled. The young man held his peace, and sighed. She was the first to break the silence.

"How is it that you come here?"

"Pardon me, if my presence is disagreeable. I came to speak with the count, your father."

"Ah," said Ethel in a different tone, "it was my father that you came to see."

The young man bent his head, for it seemed to him that such words were very unjust.

"No doubt it is a good while," the young girl continued in a reproachful tone, — "no doubt it is a good while since you were at Drontheim. It is clear, however, that your absence from the castle has not seemed long to you." Ordener, deeply wounded, made no reply. "You are quite right," the prisoner continued, in a voice trembling with grief and anger, "but," she added proudly, "I hope, Lord Ordener, that you did not hear me at prayer?"

"Countess," the young man at length replied, "I did hear you."

"Ah, Lord Ordener, it was not courteous to act the listener's part."

"I did not listen, noble countess," said Ordener weakly; "I overheard you."

"I prayed for my father," the young girl went on, looking at him fixedly, as if awaiting a response to that very simple assertion. Ordener remained silent. "I also prayed," she continued uneasily, and watching attentively the effect of her words upon her companion, — "I also prayed for some one who bears your name, for the son of the viceroy, the Count of Guldenlew. We are commanded, you know, to pray for every one, even for our persecutors."

And then the young girl blushed, for she knew that she was speaking deceitfully. But she was annoyed at the young man's behavior, and she thought that she had named him in her prayer, but she had named him only in her heart.

"Ordener Guldenlew is greatly to be pitied, noble lady, if you count him among your persecutors. He is very fortunate, however, to have a place in your prayers."

"Oh, no," said Ethel, troubled and alarmed at the young man's coldness; "no, I was not praying for him. I know not what I did or what I am doing. As to the viceroy's son, I detest him, and do not know him. Don't look at me with such severity. Have I offended you? Can you pardon nothing to a poor little prisoner, when you pass your time in the company of some beautiful and noble lady, who is as free and happy as yourself?"

"I, countess!" exclaimed Ordener.

Ethel burst into tears; the young man fell at her feet.

"Did you not tell me," she went on, smiling through her tears, "that your absence seemed short?"

"What, I, countess?"

"Don't call me that," she said softly. "I am no longer countess to anybody, and certainly not to you."

The young man rose quickly, and could not refrain from pressing her to his heart in convulsive ecstasy.

“Ah, well, my adored Ethel, then call me Ordener. Tell me,” and he looked ardently into her tearful eyes, “tell me, do you really love me?”

What the young girl said in reply was not audible; for Ordener, quite carried away in his rapture, stopped her lips with a first kiss, that sacred token, which in the eyes of Heaven is the eternal seal of love.

Neither spoke; for they were in the presence of one of those solemn moments, so rare and brief on earth, when the soul seems to have a foretaste, as it were, of the felicity of paradise. Mysterious moments these, when two souls are able to converse in a language intelligible only to themselves! Then it is that merely human bonds count for nothing; and two unhampered spirits are joined in mystic communion, for this life and for the life to come, for this world and for eternity. Ethel drew slowly back from Ordener's arms, and they looked at each other rapturously in the moonlight; but the young man's flashing eye spoke of manly pride and indomitable courage, while the young girl's half-veiled glances were expressive of that angelic modesty which in the heart of a pure woman is always mingled with the joys of love.

“A moment ago, in the corridor here,” she said finally, “you tried to avoid me, did you not, Ordener?”

“I was not trying to avoid you. I was like the unfortunate blind man, given his sight after long years, and who at first is dazzled by the light of day.”

“It is to me that your figure of speech would more properly apply, for in your absence I have had no other boon than the companionship of my unfortunate father. I passed my days in consoling him and,” she added with down-falling lids, “in waiting for you. I read to my father the stories of the Edda; and when he declared his lack of faith in man, I read from the Gospels, that at least he might not lose faith in Heaven. Then, when I spoke to him of you, he was silent, which showed that he loved you. Only when I had fruitlessly spent my afternoon, watching from afar the travellers

come and go and the vessels entering the harbor, he would bow his head with a bitter smile, and I would fall a-weeping. This prison, where all my life has been enshrined till now, became hateful to me; and yet my father, who until you came has been all in all to me, was still here. But you were not here, and I yearned for a liberty that I have never known."

An inexpressible charm, beyond the power of human words to convey, was expressed in the glances, the artless tenderness, and sweet hesitancies of the young girl, as she uttered her confession. Ordener listened with the dreamy joy of one uplifted from the world of reality to a higher and better sphere.

"And as for me," he said, "I care for freedom no longer, unless you share it."

"Do you mean to say, Ordener," Ethel quickly interposed, "that you will never leave us again?"

The question reminded the young man of what he had forgotten.

"My own Ethel, I must leave you to-night. To-morrow I will return; and to-morrow I shall leave you once more, until the time when I come back, never to leave you."

"Alas," the young girl responded mournfully, "another absence!"

"I repeat, my darling Ethel, that I shall soon return to take you away from this prison, or bury myself here with you."

"Imprisoned with him!" she said softly. "Ah, do not deceive me; can I possibly hope for such happiness as that?"

"What oath shall I take? What do you ask of me?" exclaimed Ordener; "tell me, dear Ethel, are you not mine?" and in a transport of love he pressed her strongly to his breast.

"I am yours," she murmured faintly.

The two noble and pure hearts beat thus in ecstasy against each other, and by this experience were made the nobler and more pure.

At this moment a violent outburst of laughter echoed close

beside them. A man, wrapped up in a cloak, uncovered a dark lantern which he was carrying, and let its light fall suddenly upon the alarmed and shrinking Ethel and the astounded and haughty face of Ordener.

“Bravo, my pretty couple, bravo! But it seems to me that after having travelled for so short a time in the country of Devotion, you have not followed all the windings of the stream of Sentiment, and that you must have taken a cross-road to get so quickly to the hamlet of Kiss.”

Our readers have no doubt already recognized the lieutenant admirer of Mlle. de Scudéry. Torn from his reading of *Clélie*, by the midnight bell, — which the lovers had not heard, — he was making his nocturnal rounds of the donjon. In going by the eastern end of the corridor, he had heard voices, and seen two spectral forms moving about in the moonlighted gallery. Then, being naturally both inquisitive and daring, he had concealed his lantern under his cloak, and advanced on tiptoe upon the two phantoms, who had been disagreeably snatched from their ecstasy by his rude outburst of laughter.

Ethel made a movement as if she were about to fly from Ordener, then, turning toward him as if by instinct and begging for protection, she concealed her burning face against the young man's breast.

Ordener uplifted his head, with an expression of royal dignity.

“It shall go hard with him,” he said, “who dares to frighten or trouble you, my darling Ethel!”

“Oh, yes, indeed,” said the lieutenant; “may it go hard with me if I have been so awkward as to alarm the charming Mandane.”¹

“Sir Lieutenant,” said Ordener in a haughty tone, “you will be kind enough to keep silence.”

“Sir Insolent,” responded the officer, “be kind enough to keep silence yourself.”

¹ Heroine of Mlle. Scudéry's romance, *Cyrus the Great*.

"Do you hear me?" continued Ordener, in a voice of thunder; "silence alone will secure your pardon."

"*Tibi tua*," responded the lieutenant; "take your advice to yourself. Silence alone will secure your pardon."

"Be silent!" shouted Ordener in tones that made the windows rattle; and, placing the trembling young girl in one of the old arm-chairs that stood in the corridor, he shook the officer forcibly by the arm.

"Well, peasant," said the lieutenant, half laughing, half angry; "perhaps you do not notice that this doublet you are handling so roughly is made of the finest Abington velvet."

"Lieutenant," said Ordener, looking at him sternly, "my patience is shorter than my sword."

"I understand you, my frisky young gallant," said the lieutenant, with an ironical smile; "no doubt you would be glad to have me do you such an honor, but do you know who I am? No, no; pray excuse me. 'Prince to prince, shepherd to shepherd,' in the words of the brave Leander."

"If one were also to say coward to coward," retorted Ordener, "most assuredly I should not have the distinguished honor of measuring swords with you."

"I should get angry, my worthy shepherd, if you but wore a uniform."

"I wear neither gold lace nor epaulets, lieutenant; but I wear a sword."

The proud youth, throwing back his cloak and donning his hat, seized his sword-hilt, when Ethel, aroused by the imminent danger, threw herself upon his arm and hung about his neck, with an utterance of alarm and supplication.

"You do wisely, most charming lady, if you are desirous that this stripling here be not punished for his audacity," said the lieutenant, who at Ordener's threat had quietly put himself in guard. "For," he added, "Cyrus was about to quarrel with Cambyzes, — if I am not doing too much honor to this vassal in comparing him with Cambyzes."

"In the name of Heaven, Lord Ordener," said Ethel, "do

not let me be the cause and the witness of such a misfortune!" Then, raising her beautiful eyes to his, she added, "Ordener, I beg of you!"

Ordener slowly thrust back the half-drawn blade into its scabbard, while the lieutenant exclaimed, —

"By my faith, chevalier, — I don't know whether or not that is your actual title, but I give it to you, because you seem to be worthy of it, — let us, you and I, follow the laws of bravery and not those of gallantry. The young lady is right; encounters like that I believe you to be worthy of entering into with me should not have feminine witnesses, in spite of the fact, if the charming young lady will pardon the observation, that they often have a feminine cause. We can therefore only conveniently consider here the '*duellum remotum*;' and if you, as the offended party, will fix upon the time, the place, and the weapons, my sharp Toledo blade or Merida dagger will exchange compliments with your cleaver, which doubtless came from the forges of Ashkreuth, or your hunting-knife, tempered in Sparbo's Lake."

The "postponed duel," which the officer proposed to Ordener, was much in fashion in the North, where, as wise men tell us, the custom of duelling originated. The most valiant gentlemen made and accepted challenges to the "*duellum remotum*." Sometimes it was put off for several months, sometimes for several years, and during the intervening period the adversaries were required not to refer, either in speech or action, to the affair which had led to the challenge. Thus, if it were a question of love, the two rivals abstained from visiting their inamorata, in order that both might be on absolutely equal terms. The loyalty of the contestants was as much depended upon in such affairs as it was in the ancient tournaments, when the judges, if they thought that the law of courtesy had been violated, threw their staff of office into the arena, and brought all the combatants to an instant pause; but until the question was settled the throat of the vanquished might not be removed a hair's breadth from the victor's sword.

"Very well, chevalier," said Ordener, after a moment's thought. "A messenger shall inform you of the place."

"So be it," responded the lieutenant; "that will be all the better, because it will give me time to attend my sister's wedding, for you must know that you are to have the honor of fighting with the future brother-in-law of that most noble lord, the son of the viceroy of Norway, Baron Ordener Guldenlew, and who, on the occasion of these illustrious nuptials, — as Artamenes has it, — is to be made Count of Danneskiold, colonel and chevalier of the Order of the Elephant; and I myself, who am the son of the grand chancellor of the two kingdoms, shall doubtless be gazetted a captain."

"Well, well, Lieutenant Ahlefeld," said Ordener impatiently, "you are not a captain yet, nor is the viceroy's son a colonel, — and swords are always swords."

"And boors are always boors, whatever effort one may make to lift them to one's own level," muttered the officer, between his teeth.

"Chevalier," Ordener went on, "you know the law of courtesy. You will come no more to this donjon, and you will keep silence about the affair."

"As to silence, you may depend upon it. I shall be as mute as was Mucius Scævola when he had his hand in the brazier. I will come no more to the donjon, neither I nor any of the garrison guard; for I have just received orders to leave Schumacker unguarded hereafter, — orders which I am commanded to make known to him to-night. I should have done so already, if I had not used up a large part of the evening in trying on some new Cracow boots. These orders, between ourselves, are very imprudent. Will you like to have me show you the boots?"

While this conversation was taking place, Ethel, seeing their anger assuaged, and not understanding in the least the meaning of a "*duellum remotum*," had disappeared, after whispering softly in Ordener's ear, "To-morrow!"

"I shall be greatly obliged, Lieutenant Ahlefeld, if you will aid me in getting out of the fortress."

“Willingly,” said the officer, “although it is a little late, or rather somewhat early. But how will you get a boat?”

“I’ll take care of that,” said Ordener.

Then, conversing in a friendly way, they traversed the garden, the circular court, and the square courtyard; and Ordener, being in the company of the officer of the guard, met nowhere with any detention. They crossed the portcullis, went along by the artillery shed, walked over the parade ground, and came to the low tower, where the iron gate was opened at the lieutenant’s command.

“Till we meet again, Lieutenant Ahlefeld,” said Ordener.

“Till we meet again,” replied the officer. “I’m ready to declare that you are a brave champion; although I do not know your name, and cannot tell whether those of your peers who will attend you to the place of meeting will be of sufficient rank to be spoken of as seconds, or will be obliged to figure simply as witnesses.”

They clasped hands, the iron gate was closed, and the lieutenant turned back, humming one of Lulli’s tunes, to his Polish boots and French novel.

Left alone at the entrance, Ordener took off his clothes, wrapped them in his cloak, and tied them upon his head with his sword belt; then, making a practical application of Schumacker’s ideas of liberty, he sprang into the cold, still water, and began swimming in the darkness toward the shore, taking his course in the direction of the Spladgest, a destination which he was fairly sure of reaching, either dead or alive.

The fatigues of the day had exhausted his strength, and he had a hard fight to make a landing. He dressed himself quickly, and walked toward the Spladgest, which stood forth darkly by the quay, for the moon had for some time been entirely concealed.

As he drew near the building, he heard what seemed like a sound of voices, and a feeble light shone forth from the upper opening. In astonishment he knocked loudly at the square door, when the noise ceased and the light disappeared. He

knocked again; and, the light shining forth once more, he saw something black come out of the upper orifice, and crouch down upon the flat roof of the structure. Ordener rapped a third time with the pommel of his sword, and called out, "Open, in the name of his majesty, the king! Open, in the name of his serene highness, the viceroy!"

At length the door slowly opened, and Ordener was confronted with the long, pale, meagre face of Spiagudry, who, with disordered clothing, haggard eyes, and dishevelled hair, bore in his bloody hands a sepulchral lamp, the flame of which trembled less visibly than did his colossal frame.

CHAPTER VI.

Pirro. Never!

Angelo. What! I believe you're posing in the garb of piety. Wretch, if you utter a single word —

Pirro. But Angelo, for love of God, I conjure you —

Angelo. Let alone what you cannot help.

Pirro. Ah, when the devil holds one by a hair, one needs must give to him the whole head. Unhappy that I am!

Emilia Galotti.

ABOUT an hour after the young, black-plumed traveller had emerged from the Spladgest, darkness having arrived and the crowd having taken its departure, Oglypiglap had closed the outer door of the gloomy building, while his master, Spiagudry, was washing for the last time the bodies that had been placed in his care. Then both had withdrawn into their far from sumptuously furnished apartments; and while Oglypiglap slept on his wretched pallet, like one of the corpses confided to his keeping, old Spiagudry, sitting before a stone table, covered with musty books, dried plants, and polished bones, plunged into researches, which, although innocent enough in themselves, had contributed not a little to give him among the people a reputation for sorcery and diabolism, — such being the deplorable attribute which science was obliged to bear at that epoch.

He had been for several hours absorbed in his meditations, and was about to quit his books for his bed, when his attention was arrested by these sinister words in a copy of Thormodus Torfœus.

“When a man lights his lamp, death will be in his house before it is extinguished.”

“With all due respect to the learned doctor,” he said in an undertone, “it shall not be so in my house to-night.” And he took the lamp to blow out the flame.

“Spiagudry!” called a voice from the room where the corpses were.

The old man trembled from head to foot. It was not that he believed, as another might have done in his place, that the Spladgest’s melancholy wards were rebelling against their guardian. He was wise enough not to be affected by such imaginary terrors. His emotion was real, because he recognized only too well the voice that was calling him.

“Spiagudry!” the voice repeated loudly; “is it necessary, to make you hear, for me to come and tear your ears off?”

“St. Hospitius have pity, not on my soul, but on my body!” exclaimed the old man in alarm; and, with dragging yet anxious footsteps, he went to the second side door and opened it. Our readers have not forgotten that this door gave entrance to the mortuary chamber.

There the lamp which he bore lighted up a curiously hideous picture. On one side stood the thin, long, slightly inclined person of Spiagudry. On the other side a short, stout, thick-set man, clothed from head to foot in the skins of all kinds of animals still stained with dried blood, stood at the foot of Gill Stadt’s body, which, with the corpses of the young girl and the captain, lay in the background. The three mute witnesses, shrouded in gloomy shadow, were alone capable of looking without flying in terror upon the two living creatures now confronting one another.

There was something peculiarly savage in the appearance of the smaller man, as the light fell strongly upon his face. His beard was red and shaggy; and his head, covered with a moose-skin cap, seemed to bristle with hair of the same color. His mouth was large, his lips thick, his teeth white, pointed, and separated. His nose was bent like an eagle’s beak; and his rolling gray-blue eyes darted at Spiagudry an oblique glance, in which the ferocity of the tiger was tempered by the malice of the ape. This singular person was armed with a large sword, a sheathless dagger, and a stone axe, upon the

long handle of which he was leaning. His hands were covered with big gloves of blue fox-skin.

"This old spook has kept me waiting a good long while," he said to himself; and then he gave forth a sort of roar like that of a wild beast. Spiagudry would certainly have turned pale in alarm if he had been capable of turning pale.

"Do you really know," went on the little man, speaking to him directly, "that I come from Urchtal sands? Do you keep me waiting because you would like to change your straw bed for one of these stone couches?"

The spasms that shook Spiagudry increased, and the only two teeth that remained to him chattered violently.

"Pardon me, master," he said, bringing the arch of his great body down to the little man's level; "I was sleeping very soundly."

"Perhaps you would like to sleep still more soundly?"

Spiagudry had a look of terror, which on the whole was more joyful in appearance than his expression when he was trying to manifest mirth.

"Well, what is it?" the little man went on. "What's the matter with you? Do you find my presence disagreeable?"

"Oh, my lord and master," responded the old keeper, "I assure you nothing could give me greater happiness than the mere sight of your excellency." And the effort which he made to give his alarmed countenance a gratified expression would almost have aroused the derision of the dead.

"You old bob-tail fox, my excellency orders you to turn over Gill Stadt's clothes to me." As he spoke that name, the little man's ferocious and cynical face was clouded with sadness.

"Oh, master, pardon me; they are no longer here," said Spiagudry. "Your grace knows that we are obliged to deliver everything a miner possesses to the royal treasury, because the king inherits by virtue of his protectorship."

"He is right," said the little man, turning towards the corpse, folding his arms, and speaking in a melancholy tone.

“These miserable miners are like the eider-duck;¹ their nests are made for them, and then they are robbed of their plumage.”

Then, taking the corpse up in his arms, and clutching it to his breast, he uttered wild cries of love and grief, like the growling of a bear caressing its cub. With these inarticulate sounds were mingled at intervals words in an unknown tongue, which Spiagudry could not understand.

He let the corpse fall back upon the stone, and turned towards the keeper. “Cursed sorcerer, do you know the name of the ill-starred soldier who had the misfortune to supplant Gill in the favor of this girl?” He struck his foot against the frigid body of Guth Stersen, while Spiagudry shook his head.

“Very well, then, by the axe of Ingolphus, chief of my race, I will exterminate all who wear that uniform;” and he pointed to the dead officer’s clothes. “Among them all I shall find him on whom I seek to be avenged. I will burn down the whole forest to destroy the poisonous shrub which it conceals. I swore it on the day that Gill died, and I have already given him one companion that ought to give him pleasure. Oh, Gill, I see you before me, without strength or life, — you who outdid the seal as a swimmer and the chamois on the hunt, and who fought with the bear in the Kole mountains and strangled him. Here you lie, motionless, you who traversed Drontheimhus from Orkel to Lake Smiasen in one day, and who ascended the peaks of Dofre-Field as a squirrel climbs an oak-tree. Voiceless you are, Gill, and yet on the stormy heights of Kongsberg you rivalled the thunder with your song. Oh, Gill, it is in vain that for you I flooded the mines of Faroë, and set fire to the cathedral church of Drontheim. All my efforts go for naught; and I shall never see the race of Iceland’s children, the descendants of Ingolphus, the

¹ The bird from which the eider-down is obtained. The Norwegian peasants make nests for them, and then catch them unawares and pluck them.

Exterminator, perpetuated through you. My stone axe will come never to your hands; but you have left your skull to me, that I may henceforth drink from it sea-water and the blood of men." As he spoke, he seized the corpse's head. "Spiagudry," he called, "lend your aid"; and tearing off his gloves he showed his great hands, which were armed with long nails as hard and incurved as those of a wild beast.

Spiagudry, seeing that he was about to sever the corpse's neck with his knife, uttered a cry of irrepressible horror. "Just God, master, — a dead man!"

"Well," responded the little man tranquilly, "would you rather see this blade sharpened upon a living body?"

"By St. Waldenmar, by St. Usuph, in the name of St. Hospitius, spare the dead!"

"Give aid, and talk not of saints to the devil."

"My lord," the supplicating Spiagudry went on, "by your illustrious ancestor, St. Ingolphus!"

"Ingolphus the Exterminator was unsanctified, like me."

"In the name of Heaven," said the old man, falling upon his knees, "'tis from the lot of the unsanctified that I would save you."

The little man was seized with a frenzy of impatience. His cold gray eyes shot forth fire.

"Take hold!" he said, with a wave of his knife. The words were uttered as a lion would have uttered them if a lion could speak. The trembling, half-unconscious keeper bent over the black stone, and held Gill's cold, damp head in his hands, while the little man, using both sword and knife, severed the neck with singular dexterity.

The operation ended, he looked for a while at the bleeding skull, and spoke to it in words that the other could not understand; then he gave it to Spiagudry to be cleaned and washed, roaring at him this speech, —

"When I come to die, I shall not have the consolation of thinking that a descendant of Ingolphus will drink human blood and sea-water from my skull." After a few moments

of gloomy revery he spoke again: "Storm follows storm, the avalanche brings the avalanche in its train, and I shall be the last of the race. Why did not Gill take pattern after me, and hate all who wear the human face? What diabolical enemy was stronger than the demon of Ingolphus to force him into those deadly mines in the search for a little gold?"

"Your excellency is right," interrupted Spiagudry, as he held Gill's skull; "gold, as Snorro Sturleson says, may sometimes be bought too dear."

"You remind me," said the little man, "of a commission with which I must entrust you. Here is an iron box that I found upon this officer, whom, as you see, you did not wholly despoil. It is so strongly fastened that it must contain gold, the only precious thing in human eyes. You will hand it to the widow Stadt at Thoctree hamlet, in compensation for the loss of her son."

He took a small iron box from a deer-skin wallet, and handed it to Spiagudry, who received it with a bow.

"Fulfil my orders faithfully," said the little man, glancing sharply at him. "Remember that nothing can keep two demons asunder. To my mind you are more of a coward than a miser, and I shall hold you responsible for this box."

"Oh, master, upon my soul."

"No, not that; upon your bones and flesh."

At this moment the outer door of the Spladgest shook under a heavy blow. The little man looked up in surprise, while Spiagudry trembled, and put his hand in front of the lamp.

"What is it?" asked the little man grumblingly. "And you, you old rascal, you tremble now; what will you do when the judgment trumpet sounds?" A second and heavier blow sounded forth. "'Tis some dead man, eager to get in," said the speaker.

"No, master," whispered Spiagudry; "the dead are never brought after midnight."

"Dead or alive, I'll make way for him. Spiagudry, be

faithful and give no sign. I swear to you by the spirit of Ingolphus and the skull of Gill that you shall entertain the whole Munckholm regiment in your sepulchral tavern."

And fastening Gill's skull to his belt, and putting on his gloves, the little man sprang from Spiagudry's shoulders with the ability of a chamois through the upper opening, and disappeared.

A third blow shook the Spladgest, and a voice without demanded the opening of the door in the name of the king and of the viceroy. Then the old keeper, a victim to conflicting emotions, one inspired by memory and the other by hope, made his way to the square door, and swung it open.

CHAPTER VII.

She wearied herself in vain pursuit, along rough and toilsome paths, of that joy which is the ending of all temporal felicity. — *Confessions of St. AUGUSTINE.*

Returning to his study after leaving Poël, the governor of Drontheim sank into a large easy-chair, and to divert his mind called upon one of his secretaries to give an account of the petitions that had been presented to the government. The secretary, after a respectful bow, began : —

“First, the Rev. Dr. Anglyvius requests the removal of the Rev. Dr. Foxtipp, director of the Episcopal library, because of his incapacity. The petitioner cannot say as to who should succeed the incapable incumbent; he can only suggest that he himself, Dr. Anglyvius, has long performed the duties of librarian” —

“Send this rogue to the bishop,” the general broke in.

“Second, Athanasius Munder, priest and prison chaplain, begs for the pardon of twelve penitent convicts on the occasion of the glorious nuptials of his high civility, Ordener Guldenlew, baron of Thorvick, chevalier of Dannebrog and son of the viceroy, with that noble lady, Ulrica of Ahlefeld, daughter of his grace the count, grand chancellor of the two kingdoms.”

“That will do,” said the general. “I’m sorry for the convicts.”

“Third, Faustus Prudens Destrombides, a Norwegian subject and Latin poet, requests the privilege of being permitted to write the epithalamium of the aforesaid noble betrothed.”

“Dear me, the worthy man must be getting rather old, for he is the same person who in 1674 composed an epithalamium

for the projected marriage between Schumacker, then Count of Griffenfeld, and the Princess Louise Charlotte of Holstein-Augustenburg, — a marriage which did not take place. I fear,” the governor added to himself, “that Faustus Prudens is the poet of unfulfilled nuptials. Put that petition by, and give me the next. It will be well to find out, for the benefit of the aforesaid poet, if there is not a vacant bed in Drontheim hospital.”

“Fourth, the miners of Guldbranshal, the Faroë Islands, Sund-Moër, Hubfallo, Røerass, and Kongsberg, ask to be set free from the taxes due to royal guardianship.”

“Those miners are always uneasy. I hear that they are already beginning to find fault about the prolonged silence with which their request has been received. Let this be reserved for more mature deliberation.”

“Fifth, Braal, a fisherman, proclaims, by virtue of the Odelsrecht,¹ that he still maintains his intention of repurchasing his patrimony.

“Sixth, the syndics of Nøes, Løevig, Indal, Skongen, Stod, Sparbo, and other burroughs and villages of northern Drontheimhus, request that a price be set upon the head of the brigand, assassin, and incendiary, known as Hans, and who is supposed to be a native of Klipstadur in Iceland. Nychol Orugix, executioner of Drontheimhus, opposes the petition, with the claim that Hans is his own property. The petition is supported by Benignus Spiagudry, keeper of the Spladgest, who claims right of reversion in the body.”

“This bandit is certainly a very dangerous fellow,” said the general, “especially when there is any fear of trouble with the miners. Issue a proclamation setting the price of a thousand royal crowns upon his head.”

“Seventh, Benignus Spiagudry, physician, antiquary, sculp-

¹ The Odelsrecht is a peculiar law which resulted in a sort of *majorat*, — or succession to property according to age, — among the Norwegian peasantry. Every man who might be obliged to give up his patrimony could prevent the purchaser from securing its alienation by giving notice to the authorities, every ten years, that he intended to repurchase.

tor, mineralogist, naturalist, botanist, legist, chemist, machinist, physicist, astronomer, theologian, grammarian," —

"There, there," interposed the general, "is not this the same Spiagudry who is keeper of the Spladgest?"

"The same man, your excellency," responded the secretary, — "keeper for his majesty of the establishment called the Spladgest, in the royal city of Drontheim, proclaims that he, Benignus Spiagudry, has discovered that the fixed stars are not lighted by the star called the sun; item, that the true name of Odin is Frigga, son of Fridulph; item, that the sea-worm lives on sand; item, that the noise made by the people drives the fish away from the shores of Norway, so that the means of subsistence decrease proportionately with the increase in the population; item, that the bay called Otte-Sund was formerly called Linfiord, and received the name Otte-Sund only after Otho the Red was thrown into it; item, he further makes known that by his advice and under his direction an old statue of Freya has been transformed into the statue of Justice, which adorns the grand square in Drontheim, the lion which was under the idol's feet having been made over into a devil, representing crime; item" —

"There, there, let us hear no more about his eminent services. Find out what he wants."

The secretary turned over several pages, and went on: "The most humble petitioner begs to suggest that, in recompense for so many useful services to science and literature, your excellency will increase the tax upon every dead body, male and female, by ten ascalins, — a proceeding which cannot fail to be agreeable to the dead, since it will demonstrate the value placed upon their bodies."

Here the study door opened, and an usher announced in a loud voice, "Her noble ladyship, the Countess of Ahlefeld." At the same moment the countess entered, richly clothed in a scarlet satin robe trimmed with ermine and gold lace, and wearing her coronet on her head; she took the hand which the general offered her, and seated herself close to his easy-chair.

The countess appeared to be about fifty years old, but her age could have had little to do with increasing the wrinkles that the demands of pride and ambition had for so long a time carved upon her face. She greeted the governor with a haughty look and a deceitful smile.

"Well, my lord general, your ward keeps us waiting. He ought to have been here before sundown."

"He would be here, my dear countess, if upon his arrival he had not gone immediately to Munckholm."

"What, to Munckholm! I hope he has not gone in search of Schumacker?"

"It may possibly be so."

"Baron Thorvick's first visit to be made to Schumacker!"

"Why not, countess? Schumacker is unhappy."

"Can it be, general, that the viceroy's son is in confidential relations with a state prisoner?"

"When Frederic Guldenlew confided his son to my charge, countess, he besought me to bring him up as I would bring up a son of my own. It seemed to me that acquaintance with Schumacker would be useful to Ordener, who is destined some day to be as powerful as the other, so with the consent of the viceroy I got from my brother, Grummond de Knud, a permit for entrance to all the prisons. I have given it to Ordener, and he makes use of it."

"And since when, my lord general, has Baron Ordener made this beneficent acquaintance?"

"For a little more than a year, lady countess. It seems that Schumacker's society is very agreeable, for it has detained him for a long time at Drontheim; and it was only with reluctance, and at my express commands, that he left last year for a tour of Norway."

"And does Schumacker know that his sympathetic companion is the son of one of his greatest enemies?"

"He knows that he has found a friend, and that is sufficient for him, as it is for us."

"But are you aware, my lord general," said the countess,

with an earnest look, — “are you aware, in tolerating and in facilitating this friendship, that Schumacker has a daughter ?”

“I have been quite aware of the fact, noble countess.”

“And this circumstance seemed to you to be of no consequence to your ward ?”

“The ward of Levin de Knud and the son of Frederic Guldenlew is a man of honor. Ordener knows the barrier which separates him from Schumacker’s daughter; and he is incapable of doing wrong to any woman, and especially to the daughter of one in adversity.”

The noble Countess of Ahlefeld reddened and grew pale, then turned away her face, seeking to evade the steady gaze of the old man, as if he were an accusing judge.

“None the less,” she stammered, “the affair seems to me, if you will pardon me for saying so, general, most singular and imprudent. It is said that the miners and common people in the North are threatening to revolt, and that Schumacker’s name is mixed up in the matter.”

“My lady, you astonish me,” exclaimed the governor. “Schumacker has up to this time endured his misfortune in perfect docility. The rumor is probably without foundation.”

At this moment the door opened; and the usher announced that a messenger from his grace, the grand chancellor, desired audience with the noble countess. The latter thereupon rose quickly, bowed to the governor, and while he went on examining petitions, she hurried to her apartments in another wing of the palace, and commanded that the messenger be sent to her there.

When the messenger appeared, she had been sitting for several moments on a richly upholstered sofa with her women about her. When her eyes fell upon the newcomer she made a gesture of repugnance, the effect of which she sought to destroy with a benevolent smile. There was nothing in the aspect of the messenger that at first glance would be likely to awaken repulsion. He was a man somewhat below medium stature, whose stoutness was rather out of keeping with his

duties. When, however, his person was examined more closely, his expression was seen to be bold to the point of impudence, and his air of gayety gave the impression of something diabolical and sinister. He bowed low before the countess, and handed her a packet, sealed with silk thread.

"Noble lady," he said, "deign to permit me to dare to place at your feet a precious message from his grace, your illustrious husband and my venerated master."

"Is he not coming himself?" the countess demanded; "and how is it that he chose you for his messenger?"

"Affairs of importance have forced his grace to postpone his visit; and this letter, my lady countess, is to inform you what they are. As for me, I am, by order of my noble master, to have the distinguished honor of a private interview with you."

"With me!" the countess exclaimed, in a trembling voice, and turning pale, — "I am to have an interview with you, Musdæmon?"

"If my noble lady is discommoded at the suggestion, her unworthy servant will succumb with despair."

"Discommoded? No, not in the least," responded the countess, with a forced smile; "but is this interview necessary?"

"Absolutely necessary," said the messenger, bowing to the floor. "The letter, which the illustrious countess has deigned to receive from my hands, contains a formal order to that effect."

It was not a little remarkable to see the proud Countess of Ahlefeld tremble and turn pale before a servitor who approached her with such profound respect. She opened the packet slowly and read the contents. After a second reading, she said to her women, in a low voice, —

"You may leave us alone."

"Will the noble lady deign to pardon me," said the messenger on bended knee, "for the liberty that I have ventured to take, and the trouble I seem to be occasioning?"

"I beg you to believe, on the contrary," responded the countess, with her forced smile, "that I take the greatest pleasure in receiving you." The women left the room.

"Have you forgotten, Elphega, that there was once a time when the prospect of an interview with me was not at all repugnant to you?"

This speech, addressed to the countess by the messenger, was accompanied by a laugh similar to that which the devil may be supposed to utter, when a compact has expired, and he makes his seizure of a soul that he has purchased.

"Ah, no, you may be sure I have not forgotten!" the noble countess murmured, bowing her head in humiliation.

"Poor fool, why do you blush for things no human eye has ever seen?"

"If men do not see, God sees."

"God, silly woman; you are not worthy of having deceived your husband, for he is less credulous than you."

"It is not generous in you to make sport at my remorse, Musdæmon."

"Ah, well, Elphega, if you really feel remorse, why do you make sport of it yourself, from day to day, with new offences?" The Countess of Ahlefeld hid her face in her hands, and the messenger went on. "Elphega, you are obliged to choose, either remorse and further crimes, or crime and no more remorse. Do as I do; choose the second and better part, the part that is at least the most agreeable."

"I hope and pray," said the countess in an undertone, "that these words may not be brought up against you at the judgment!"

"Well, well, my dear, let us talk seriously," said Musdæmon, seating himself by the countess and putting his arms about her. "Elphega," he added, "try to be, in spirit at least, what you were twenty years ago."

The unfortunate countess dared not assert herself against her accomplice, and tried to respond to his repulsive caress. There was in this adulterous embrace, of two creatures who

mutually despised and loathed each other, something unspeakably revolting, even to their degraded souls. The unlawful caresses which had once been their joy, and which the abhorrent force of custom compelled them to renew, were now a source of torture. It was a marvellous and just punishment that had come upon their guilty passion,—the crime itself had carried its own retribution.

To shorten the remorseful torment to which she was subjected, the countess finally released herself from the arms of her odious lover, and asked him what oral message her husband had given to him.

“Ahlefeld, although he sees that his power is on the point of being firmly established by the marriage of Ordener Guldenlew with our daughter” —

“Our daughter!” exclaimed the haughty countess, fixing upon Musdæmon an expression of pride and disdain.

“Oh, well,” said the messenger coldly, “I suppose that Ulrica belongs to me, at least as much as she does to him. But I was saying that this marriage would not be wholly satisfactory to your husband, if Schumacker were not at the same time completely overthrown. Shut up in a prison, the old favorite is still almost as greatly to be feared as he was in his palace. The friends he has at court are humble, but they are powerful because of their obscurity, and the king, learning a month ago that no progress was being made in the grand chancellor’s negotiations with the Duke of Holstein-Ploen, exclaimed impatiently, ‘Griffenfeld knew more than all of them put together!’ A tricky fellow, named Dispol-sen, went from Munckholm to Copenhagen and had several private audiences, after which the king made a requisition on the chancellor’s office for Schumacker’s patents of nobility and the records of his estates. No one knows what Schumacker is after; but if he is only in quest of liberty, that for a state prisoner is equivalent to a return to power. It is necessary, then, that he should be put to death, and that in conformity with legal requirement. It is for us to devise a

crime of which he may bear the penalty. Your husband, Elphega, under the pretext of making a tour of inspection through the northern provinces incognito, is going to find out for himself the result of our plotting among the miners, among whom we are striving to stir up in Schumacker's name an insurrection that can afterwards be easily suppressed.

"The annoying thing just now is the loss of some important papers bearing upon this scheme, and which we have every reason to believe are in the possession of Dispolsen. When we learned that he had started on his return from Copenhagen to Munckholm, carrying Schumacker's deeds and patents, and believing that he might also have with him other documents that might compromise us or defeat our purposes, we posted several henchmen in the Kole passes, with orders to make way with him, after getting his papers. But if it turns out, as we hear, that Dispolsen came from Bergen by water, all our pains will go for naught. However, on my arrival here I heard an indefinite rumor that a captain named Dispolsen had been assassinated. We shall see. Meanwhile we are hunting for a notorious bandit, called Hans of Iceland, whom we wish to make the leader in the insurrection at the mines. And you, my dear, what news have you to give me? Has the pretty Munckholm bird been safely caged? Has the old minister's daughter at last become the prey of our falcofulvus, our son Frederic?"

Pride came once more to the support of the countess, and she exclaimed, "Our son!"

"Let's see; how old is he now? Twenty-four. It is twenty-six years since we first met, Elphega."

"God knows," exclaimed the countess, "that my Frederic is the legitimate heir of the grand chancellor."

"God may know it," responded the messenger with a laugh, "but the devil does not. However, your Frederic is a feather-brained dolt, whom I do not care to claim, so it's not worth while for us to quarrel over so trifling a matter. All he's good for is in trapping girls. Has he succeeded even at that?"

“Not that I am aware of.”

“See here, Elphega; try to take a less passive interest in our affairs. The count’s part and mine are active enough, as you see. I shall return to your husband to-morrow; as for you, don’t limit yourself, I beg of you, to praying for our sins, like the Italians, who invoke the Madonna when they are about to kill somebody. More than that, it is necessary that Ahlefeld should think of some way of rewarding me a little more lavishly than he has succeeded in doing hitherto. My fortune is united with yours; but I’m tired of being the husband’s servitor when I am the wife’s lover, and of posing as tutor, preceptor, and pedagogue, when I am very near to being a father.”

At this moment midnight sounded, and one of the women came in and reminded the countess that at this hour all lights must be extinguished, in accordance with palace rules. The countess, glad to put an end to so painful an interview, summoned her attendants.

“Will the gracious countess permit me,” said Musdœmon, in taking his leave, “to retain the hope of seeing her again to-morrow, and of placing at her feet the evidences of my most profound respect?”

CHAPTER VIII.

It cannot be that thou hast murdered him;
So should a murderer look, so dread, so grim.

SHAKESPEARE: *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

"UPON my word, old man," said Ordener to Spiagudry, "I was beginning to think that the corpses lodged in this building were intrusted with attending the door."

"Pardon me, my lord," responded the keeper, with the names king and viceroy still sounding in his ears, and repeating the stupid excuse he had made before; "I—I was sound asleep."

"In that case your dead people must have been very much awake, for it was they, no doubt, that I heard just now talking to one another."

"You heard, my lord," said Spiagudry in confusion,—"you heard?"

"Good heavens, yes; but what does it matter? I am not here to occupy myself with your affairs, but to have you occupy yourself with mine. Let us go inside."

Spiagudry was not at all desirous of taking the newcomer into the presence of Gill's body, but his last words reassured him somewhat; and in any case how could he refuse? He allowed the young man to enter, and closing the door, said,—

"Benignus Spiagudry is at your service in everything that concerns human knowledge. If, however, as your nocturnal visit seems to indicate, you think you are talking with a sorcerer, you are wrong. *Ne famam quidas*. I am only a seeker. But let us go to my laboratory, my lord."

"Not at all," said Ordener; "it is with the dead bodies that we are concerned."

“With the bodies!” exclaimed Spiagudry, beginning to tremble again. “But, my lord, you cannot see them.”

“What, I cannot see the bodies, which are put here only to be seen? I tell you once more that I have some inquiries to make of you in regard to one of them, and it is your duty to answer them. Obey of your own free will, old man, or you shall obey against your will.”

Spiagudry had a profound respect for a sword, and he saw one gleaming at Ordener’s side.

“*Nihil non arrogat armis*,” he murmured; and fumbling with his bunch of keys, he opened the barrier gate, and let the stranger have access to the inner apartment.

“Show me the captain’s clothes,” said the newcomer. At this moment the lamplight fell on Gill Stadt’s dismembered body. “Great heavens,” exclaimed Ordener, “what abominable profanation!”

“Great St. Hospitius, have mercy on me!” said the old keeper, under his breath.

“Old man,” Ordener went on in a menacing tone, “are you so far from the tomb that you can violate the respect that is its due, and not have the fear, you miserable wretch, that the living will teach you what you owe to the dead?”

“Oh, mercy,” exclaimed the poor keeper; “it was not I! If you knew!” He checked himself, for he remembered the little man’s injunction: “Be faithful and give no sign.” Then he asked of the newcomer, in a husky voice, —

“Did you see anybody go out through the upper opening?”

“Yes. Was it your accomplice?”

“No; it was the culprit, the only culprit, I swear it to you by all the anathemas of hell, by the benedictions of heaven, and by this body, which has been so shamefully profaned!” and he fell upon the stones at Ordener’s feet. Repulsive as was the appearance of Spiagudry, his despair and his protestations were so truthfully expressed that the young man was persuaded of his sincerity.

“Old man,” said Ordener, “get up. If you have not desecrated death, at least do not debase old age.” The keeper arose, and Ordener inquired, “Who is the guilty one?”

“Oh, do not ask, my noble young lord. You do not know of whom you speak. Say no more!” and Spiagudry repeated to himself the words: “Be faithful and give no sign.”

“But who is the guilty one? I wish to know,” Ordener asked once more and coldly.

“In Heaven’s name, my lord, speak no more of this. Be silent for fear” —

“Fear cannot keep me silent, and it can make you speak.”

“Pardon me, pardon, my young master!” said the despairing Spiagudry; “I cannot tell you.”

“You can, for I desire that you should. Give me the name of the profaner.”

Spiagudry still clung to evasion. “Well, noble master, the profaner of this corpse was the one who killed the officer.”

“The officer was killed, then?” asked Ordener, reminded by this suggestion of the object he had in view.

“Yes, without any doubt, my lord.”

“And by whom? By whom?”

“In the name of your patron saint, do not seek to know, my young master; do not force me to reveal it.”

“If the interest that I had in knowing it needed to be intensified, you would add to it, old man, by stimulating my curiosity. I command you to tell me the murderer’s name.”

“Well,” said Spiagudry, “take note of those deep gashes made with long, sharp nails upon the unhappy body. They will tell you who the assassin was.” And the old man pointed out the long, deep scratches upon the naked and cleansed body.

“What,” said Ordener, “was it some wild beast?”

“No, my young master.”

“But if it were not the devil” —

“Hush, have a care that you do not guess too well. Have you never heard,” the keeper went on, in a low voice, “of a

man, or a monster with human face, with nails as long as those of our destroyer, Ashtaroth, or of the Antichrist who holds our future doom ? ”

“ Speak more to the point.”

“ Woe, says the Apocalypse ” —

“ I ask you for the murderer’s name.”

“ The murderer’s name ? My lord, have pity on me ; have pity on yourself.”

“ That last plea of yours would destroy the first, even if the most serious motives did not oblige me to tear the name from you. Do not abuse my patience longer.”

“ Very well, young man, since you will have it,” said Spia-gudry, standing upright and speaking in a loud voice ; “ the murderer and profaner is Hans of Iceland.”

The portentous title was not unknown to Ordener. “ What,” he said, “ Hans, that execrable bandit ? ”

“ Do not call him bandit, for he lives alone.”

“ Then, miserable wretch, how is it that you know him ? What crimes in common have brought you two together ? ”

“ Oh, noble master, do not be influenced by appearances. Is the oak-tree’s trunk poisonous, because the serpent has its shelter there ? ”

“ No more trifling words ! A villain’s friend must be, an accomplice.”

“ I am not his friend, and much less his accomplice ; and if, my lord, my oaths have not persuaded you, have the goodness to observe that this detestable profanation will expose me, in the course of twenty-four hours, when they come to take Gill Stadt’s body away, to the penalty for sacrilege, and that I am for this reason plunged into the most frightful disquietude that an innocent man can be called upon to endure.”

This avowal of personal interest did more to convince Ordener than the supplicating tones of the poor keeper, because it was probably the chief cause of his pathetic, though useless, resistance to the little man’s horrible act. Ordener thought the matter over for a moment, and meanwhile Spiagudry tried

to learn from his expression whether the result was likely to be for peace or war. At last Ordener said, in a stern, judicial tone, —

“Old man, tell the truth. Did you find any papers on that officer?”

“None, upon my honor.”

“Do you know if Hans of Iceland found any?”

“I swear to you, by St. Hospitius, that I do not.”

“You do not know? Are you aware where Hans of Iceland hides himself?”

“He is never in hiding; he is always on the move.”

“That may be, but what places does he frequent?”

“The pagan has as many lairs as Hitterin island has reefs, or Sirius rays of light,” responded the old man in a low voice.

“Once more, I command you,” Ordener interposed, “to speak without evasion. I will set the example, therefore listen. You are in some mysterious way involved with a brigand, and you declare that you were not his accomplice. Since you know him, you must be aware of his present hiding-place. Do not interrupt me. If you are not his accomplice, you will not hesitate to take me where he is.”

Spiagudry could not contain himself for fright. “You, my noble lord; you, — great God, — you, so full of youth and life, to seek out and provoke the wrath of that demon! When four-armed Ingiald fought with Niktolm, the giant, he at least had four arms.”

“Well,” said Ordener smilingly, “if four arms are needed, are you not to be my guide?”

“I, your guide! How can you make such sport of a poor old man, who has need enough of a guide for himself?”

“Listen,” responded Ordener; “do not try to make sport with me. If this profanation, of which I am willing to believe you innocent, exposes you to the penalty for sacrilege, you cannot stay here, — you must therefore fly. I offer you protection, but on condition that you take me to the brigand’s retreat. Be my guide, and I will be your protector. I will

do more ; if I get hold of Hans of Iceland, I will bring him here, dead or alive. You will be able to prove your innocence, and I promise that you shall be reinstated in your employment. In the meantime, here are more royal crowns than the place can bring you in a whole year."

By reserving his purse until the last, Ordener had followed the exact and profitable laws of logic in making his argument. His first suggestion, however, had been strong enough to make Spiagudry thoughtful. He began by taking the money.

"Noble master, you are right," he said at length, bringing his erstwhile wandering glance to bear upon him. "If I accompany you, I run the risk of Hans's frightful vengeance. If I remain, I shall fall to-morrow into the hands of Orugix, the executioner. What is the punishment for sacrilege? Never mind. In either case, my poor life is in peril; but in accordance with the wise utterance of Sæmond Sigfusson, otherwise called the Sage, *Inter duo pericula æqualia minus, imminens eligendum est*, and I go with you. Yes, my lord, I will be your guide. Be kind enough to bear in mind, however, that I have done all that I possibly could to turn you aside from your adventurous mission."

"Very well," said Ordener. "You will be my guide. Old man," he added, with a searching look, "I shall count upon your loyalty."

"Ah, master," responded the keeper, "Spiagudry's faith is as unstained as the gold you but just now so graciously gave to me."

"Let it continue to be so, for in default of that I shall prove to you that steel is in some cases no less effectual than gold. Where do you think Hans of Iceland to be?"

"Well, as southern Drontheimus is full of troops, sent there for some unknown purpose by the grand chancellor, Hans has probably made for Walderhog grotto or Lake Smiasen. Our route is by way of Skongen."

"How soon can we start?"

"When this day that is just dawning is ended, and the

Spladgest shall be closed for the night, your humble servant will assume the duties of a guide, and give over his ministrations to the dead. We must find some means of concealing the mutilation of the miner's body from the eyes of the people while the day is passing."

"Where shall I find you to-night?"

"In the public square, if agreeable to you, my master, close by the statute of Justice, once the statue of Freya, who perhaps will protect me by her shadow, in acknowledgment of the fine devil that I had carved under her feet."

Spiagudry would probably have gone on rehearsing the items in his petition to the governor, if Ordener had not interrupted.

"That will do, old man; it is a bargain."

"It's a bargain," repeated the keeper.

As he spoke these words, a rumbling noise seemed to come from above their heads. The keeper shuddered.

"What was that?" he said.

"Does no one else live here with you?" asked Ordener, equally surprised.

"Why, yes, my assistant, Oglypiglap," responded Spiagudry, reassured at the thought; "no doubt 'tis he snoring. According to Bishop Arngrim, a Laplander asleep makes as much noise as a woman when she is awake."

While they were talking, they moved towards the Spladgest's outer door. Spiagudry opened it softly.

"Farewell, my young lord," he said to Ordener; "may heaven be gracious to you. To-night we meet again; and if meantime your pathway takes you by St. Hospitius' cross, deign to utter a prayer for your humble servitor, Benignus Spiagudry."

Then, quickly closing the door, as much from fear of being seen as to guard his lamp from the early morning breeze, he went back to Gill's body, and busied himself with arranging it in such a way as to hide the mutilation.

More reasons than one had induced the timid keeper to accept the stranger's venturesome offer. First among the

motives that led to his reckless decision was the fear inspired by Ordener ; second, dread of Orugix, the executioner ; third, a deep-lying hatred for Hans of Iceland, a hatred that he hardly dared confess to himself, so great was the terror that the man inspired ; fourth, devotion to science, for which the journey would afford opportunity ; fifth, confidence in his own shrewdness and his ability to take Hans unawares ; sixth, a speculative attraction toward a certain metal that lay in the young adventurer's purse, and which it seemed to fill as comfortably as it did the iron box, stolen from the captain and destined for the widow Stadt, — a destiny which was now in great peril of never being fulfilled.

A final inducement was the hope, well or ill founded, of sooner or later recovering the position he was about to abandon. What difference did it make to him, whether the brigand killed the traveller, or the traveller the brigand ? At this stage of his meditation he was so careless as to speak his thoughts aloud, —

“Either way, it would be another body.”

Once more the rumbling sounded overhead, and the wretched keeper trembled.

“That's none of Oglypiglap's snoring,” he said ; “that noise comes from outside.” Then, after a moment's thought, he added, “I'm very foolish to alarm myself in this way ; no doubt 'tis some dog along the harbor front.”

Then he went on arranging Gill's disfigured body ; and this accomplished, he fastened all the doors and went to his cot, to rest himself from the fatigues of the night just ended, and to renew his strength for the night that was to follow.

CHAPTER IX.

Juliet. Oh, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?

Romeo. I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.

SHAKESPEARE.

MUNCKHOLM beacon had been extinguished, and in its place the sailor coming up Drontheim bay could see the sentinel's helmet gleaming like a moving star in the rays of the rising sun, when Schumacker, according to his custom, descended into the circular garden surrounding his prison, leaning upon his daughter's arm. Both had passed a fatiguing night, — the old man through lack of sleep, and the young girl because of the blissful torment of thick-clustering dreams. They walked back and forth for some time in silence, when the old prisoner, fixing a sad and serious look upon the beautiful girl at his side, said, —

“You blush and smile and say nothing, Ethel. You are happy, for you have no need to blush for what is past, and you smile at the future.”

Ethel blushed more than ever, and smiled no longer. “My lord and father,” she said, in embarrassment and confusion, “I have brought the Edda.”

“Very well, my daughter, you may read,” said Schumacker, and he fell again into reverie.

Sitting upon a blackened rock, shaded by a sombre fir-tree, the gloomy captive heard his daughter's musical voice, taking no note of what she read, as a thirsty traveller drinks from a stream and is refreshed by its murmur.

Ethel was reading the story of Allanga, the shepherdess, who refused the wooing of a king until he had proved himself

to be a warrior. Prince Regner Lodbrog could not obtain his shepherdess until he came back as the victor over Ingolphus, the Exterminator, the brigand of Klipstadur.

At this point the reading was suddenly interrupted by the sound of footsteps and rustling leaves, and Schumacker was aroused from his meditation. Lieutenant Ahlefeld emerged from behind the rock where they were sitting. Ethel hung her head as she recognized the persistent intruder, and the officer exclaimed, —

“Upon my word, fair maiden, your charming mouth but now pronounced the name of Ingolphus, the Exterminator. I overheard it, and I suppose that it was in speaking of his descendant, Hans of Iceland, that you were led back to him. Young ladies always like to talk about brigands, and, while on this subject, let me add that peculiarly thrilling and delightful stories are told about this Ingolphus and his descendant. Ingolphus, the Exterminator, had only one son, born to a sorceress, Thoarka. This son also had but one son, and he, too, was born of a sorceress. Through four centuries the race has been perpetuated for the desolation of Iceland, and always through a single branch. Through this series of unique inheritors, the infernal spirit of Ingolphus has been brought down in all its pristine vigor to our own days, in the famous Hans of Iceland, who doubtless was just now so fortunate as to occupy this young lady’s virginal thoughts.”

The officer paused for a moment. Ethel was silent and embarrassed. Schumacker looked bored. Delighted to find them disposed to listen, if not to respond, he went on, —

“The Klipstadur brigand has but one passion, and that is hatred of the human race, — no other aim, except to kill.”

“He is a wise man,” Schumacker interrupted brusquely.

“He always lives alone,” continued the lieutenant.

“He must be happy,” said Schumacker.

The lieutenant was in ecstasy at this repeated interruption, which seemed to put the seal of approval upon his efforts at conversation.

“May the god Mithra perserve us from such wisdom and such happiness!” he exclaimed. “Cursed be the malignant zephyr that brought the last of the Iceland demons to Norway. I was wrong to say malignant, for I am assured that we are indebted to a bishop for Hans of Klipstadur. If we are to believe tradition, some Icelandic peasants seized little Hans when he was yet a child, among the Bessestedt mountains, and were about to kill him, as Astyages killed the lion’s cub in Bactriana; but the Bishop of Skalholt interposed, and took the whelp under his protection, hoping that he might be able to Christianize a devil. The good bishop made use of every imaginable means for developing his infernal intellect, regardless of the fact that a hemlock cannot be changed into a lily by being transplanted into the hothouses of Babylon.

“The young demon rewarded the bishop for his trouble by escaping across the sea one night, astride of a tree-trunk, after setting fire to the Episcopal manor-house to light him on his way. That, according to the old women around here, is the way this Icelfander got to Norway, and, thanks to his fine education, he is to-day an ideal monster. Ever since he came over, the presence of this Ahrimanes incarnate has been made known in Drontheimhus. The Faroë mines have been flooded, and three hundred workmen crushed in the ruins. The hanging rock at Golyn fell in the night on the village underneath. The Half-Broen bridge broke from the cliffs under the people who were passing over it. The cathedral at Drontheim has been burned. The coast signals have been extinguished on stormy nights, and a host of murders and other crimes lie concealed in Lakes Sparbo and Smiasen, the caves of Walderhog and Ryllass, and in Dofre-Field passes. The old women claim that a new hair comes in his beard for every crime. In that case his beard must be as big as that of a venerable Assyrian Magus. The charming young lady is probably aware that the governor several times tried to stop this marvellous beard from growing.”

Schumacker broke the silence that followed. “And all

efforts to capture this man," he said, with an air of triumph and an ironical smile, "have been in vain? I congratulate the grand chancellor's office."

The lieutenant did not understand the ex grand chancellor's sarcasm.

"Hans has up to this time been as indomitable as Horatius, surnamed Cocles. Old soldiers, young militiamen, countrymen, and mountaineers are done to death or fly before him. He is a demon who can be neither evaded nor caught. The best thing that can happen to those who go in search of him is not to find him at all.

"The gracious young lady will perhaps be surprised," he went on, seating himself familiarly by Ethel, who had drawn near her father, "at the various strange and touching facts I know of in regard to this supernatural creature. It is not without intention that I have made a collection of these extraordinary traditions. It seems to me, — and I shall be delighted if the charming young lady agrees with my opinion, — that Hans's adventures could be made into a delicious romance, after the manner of those matchless writings of Mlle. Scudéry, *Artamène* or *Clélie*, of which I have only read six volumes, but which is none the less in my eyes a masterpiece.

"It would be necessary, of course, to ameliorate our climate, polish up our traditions, and modify our barbarous names. Thus Drontheim, transformed into Durtinianum, would have its forests changed under my magic wand into charming groves, traversed by a thousand bubbling brooks, that would be much more poetical than our rude torrents. Our deep and gloomy caverns would give place to exquisite grottos, carpeted with moss-covered stones and azure shells. In one of the grottos would dwell the famous enchanter, Hannus of Thule, for you will agree that the name Hans of Iceland is not particularly acceptable to the ear. This giant — you realize how absurd it would be for the hero of such a tale not to be a giant — would be descended in the direct line from Mars, the god of war, — Ingolphus makes no appeal to

the imagination, — from Mars and Theonne, the sorceress, — is not that a delightful substitute for the name Thoarka? — daughter of the Cumæan sybil. Hannus, being brought up by the grand Magus of Thule, would make his escape from the pontifical palace in a chariot drawn by two dragons, for it would be a poor display of fancy to cling to that commonplace tradition about the tree-trunk. Reaching the shores of Durinianum, and entranced by the beauty of the country, he would make it his dwelling-place, and the arena of his crimes.

“’Twould not be altogether easy to get up an agreeable picture of Hans’s brigandly exploits; the horror of them would have to be toned down by the aid of some ingeniously contrived love affair. Alcippe, the shepherdess, guarding her flock in a grove of myrtle and olive trees, would be seen by the giant, who would immediately succumb to a glance from her eyes. But Alcippe would be in love with the handsome Lysidas, a militia officer quartered in her village. The giant would be greatly wrought up over the officer’s good fortune; and the officer, at the giant’s attentions. You will understand, gracious young lady, how much charm a fertile imagination would be able to give to Hannus’s adventures. I would be willing to wager my Cracow boots against a pair of pattens that such a theme, dealt with by Mlle. Scudéry, would inspire all the ladies of Copenhagen with rapture.”

Schumacker aroused himself from the sombre reverie into which he had fallen during the lieutenant’s ineffective display of wit.

“Copenhagen?” he said abruptly; “what is there new at Copenhagen, sir officer?”

“Nothing, upon my word, that I am aware of,” responded the lieutenant; “except that the king has given his consent to an important marriage, which is now discussed throughout the two kingdoms.”

“How is that?” responded Schumacker; “what marriage?”

The reply upon the lieutenant’s lips was checked by the

appearance of a fourth person. All three raised their eyes. The prisoner's sombre face brightened, the lieutenant's frivolous countenance became serious, and Ethel's charming features lost the pallor they had manifested during the officer's long soliloquy, and betrayed a joyful animation. The girl breathed deeply, as if her heart had been relieved from an insupportable burden, and she looked at the newcomer with a shy and wistful smile. It was Ordener.

The old man, the young girl, and the officer were in a peculiar situation with regard to Ordener, for each of them had a secret understanding with him, and in consequence each of them found the presence of the others unwelcome. That Ordener had returned to the donjon was not surprising, either to Schumacker or Ethel, for they expected him; but it astonished the lieutenant, as much as the lieutenant's presence astonished Ordener, who might have feared some indiscretion on the part of the officer in regard to the events of the preceding night, if the injunction to silence prescribed by the law of courtesy had not reassured him. He could only marvel, then, at seeing his adversary settled so peaceably with the two prisoners.

These four people could say nothing to each other while they were together, because they had so much to say to one another in a confidential way. The consequence was that the only welcome extended to Ordener was expressed in expectant and embarrassed glances.

"By the hem of the royal mantle, my dear newcomer," the lieutenant exclaimed, with an outburst of laughter, "this silence is something like that of the Gallic senators when Brennus, the Roman — I don't know, on my honor, which was Roman and which Gallic, the senators or the general. But never mind, since you are here, help me to regale our honorable friend here with the news. I was just on the point, when you came in, of giving some information concerning the illustrious marriage, which is just now receiving so much attention from the Medes and Persians."

"What marriage?" asked Ordener and Schumacker, both together.

"By the cut of your garments, sir stranger," the lieutenant exclaimed, clapping his hands, "I had already decided that you came from some other world. The question you now ask changes suspicion to certainty. You must have landed yesterday on the banks of the Nidder, in a fairy chariot drawn by two winged dragons; for you could not have travelled through Norway without hearing of the celebrated marriage between the viceroy's son and the grand chancellor's daughter."

"What," said Schumacker, turning towards the lieutenant, "Ordener Guldenlew is to marry Ulrica Ahlefeld?"

"Precisely so," responded the officer, "and the affair will be concluded before the latest French fashion in farthingales gets to Copenhagen."

"Frederic's son must be about twenty-two, for I had been a year in Copenhagen fortress when I heard of the great festivities over his birth. Let him marry young," Schumacker went on, with a bitter smile; "when the hour of disgrace comes upon him he will not be thought the less of for having aspired to a cardinal's hat." The old courtier was making an allusion to his own misfortunes, which the lieutenant did not comprehend.

"Not at all," he said, with an outburst of laughter. "Baron Ordener will receive the title of count, the badge of the Elephant, and a colonel's epaulets, none of which will harmonize very well with a cardinal's biretta."

"So much the better," responded Schumacker; and after a moment's pause he added, shaking his head, as if the day of vengeance were before him, "the time perhaps will come when they will use his collar of nobility to throttle him with, break his count's coronet upon his forehead, and slap his epaulets in his face."

Ordener seized the old man's hand. "Your hatred would be more worthily bestowed, if you would not curse the good

fortune of your enemy until you know what value he himself may put upon it."

"Ah, well," said the lieutenant, "what matters to Baron Thorvick this good man's maledictions?"

"Lieutenant," exclaimed Ordener, "they matter more to him than you can think, perhaps; and," he went on, after a moment's silence, "your much-talked-of marriage is less a certainty than you believe."

"*Fiat quod vis*," retorted the lieutenant, with an ironical bow; "it is true that the king, the viceroy, and the grand chancellor are all favorable to the nuptials; they are doing everything to make the affair a success; but if it does not meet with the approval of my lord the stranger, what matter the wishes of the grand chancellor, the viceroy, and the king?"

"Perhaps you are right," said Ordener gravely.

"Oh, on my word," and the lieutenant fell backward in his mirth, "this is too amusing. I would give anything to have Baron Thorvick here, that he might see his destiny decided by such an omniscient oracle. Take my word for it, august prophet, your beard is not thick enough yet to allow you to pass as a sorcerer."

"Lieutenant," Ordener replied coldly, "I do not think that Ordener Guldenlew would marry any woman whom he did not love."

"Dear me, what a book of maxims! And who told you, my lord of the green cloak, that the baron is not in love with Ulrica Ahlefeld?"

"And tell me, if you please, in your turn, who has told you that he is in love with her?"

As often happens in the ardor of conversation, the lieutenant was led on to affirm as true something that he was not sure of.

"Who told me that he loves her? That is a droll question! Your faculties for divination seem to have deserted you. Why, all the world knows that this marriage is as much a love affair as it is a matter of policy."

"When you say all the world, you may except me," said Ordener seriously.

"Very well, except you; but what of that? You can't prevent the viceroy's son from being in love with the chancellor's daughter."

"In love?"

"Madly in love!"

"He must indeed be mad, to be in love with her."

"See here, just bear in mind of whom you are speaking. Might not one think that the viceroy's son would be free to bestow his affections where he wished, without consulting this clodhopper?"

Saying this the officer got up. Ethel, seeing the flush of anger in Ordener's face, stepped in front of him.

"Oh," she said, "for pity's sake be calm, and pay no attention to his insults. What is it to you, if the viceroy's son is in love with the chancellor's daughter?"

This gentle appeal touched the young man's heart, and calmed the rising tempest. He bent an enraptured look upon Ethel, and ignored the lieutenant, who recovered his spirits, and exclaimed, —

"The young lady shows infinite grace in playing the part of the Sabine women between their fathers and their husbands. My words were inconsiderate. I forgot," he went on, addressing himself to Ordener, "that there is a bond of fraternity between us, and that we must not provoke one another. Chevalier, give me your hand. Acknowledge that you also forgot that in speaking of the viceroy's son you were addressing his future brother-in-law, Lieutenant Ahlefeld."

At the utterance of this name, Schumacker, who up to that time had been an indifferent or impatient auditor, sprang from his stone seat with a frightful cry.

"Ahlefeld! An Ahlefeld here before me! Serpent, how is it that I have not recognized the execrable father in the son? Leave me at peace in my dungeon; I was not condemned to the punishment of looking upon you. All that is

lacking now is, what some one just now wished, that I should see Guldenlew's son standing by Ahlefeld's! Traitors and cowards, why do they not come themselves to get their joy of my tears of rage and madness? Detestable brood! Son of Ahlefeld, leave me!"

The officer was at first stunned by the ardor of these imprecations, but he soon broke forth in angry speech.

"Silence, you old idiot! Have you so soon got done with chanting your diabolical litany?"

"Leave, leave me!" continued the old man, "and carry my curse with you,—for you and the wretched race of Guldenlew, that is to be allied with yours."

"By heavens," the officer exclaimed furiously, "you heap a double insult on me!"

Ordener checked the lieutenant, who was quite beside himself. "Respect old age in your enemy, lieutenant. We already have one affair to settle between us. I will be responsible for any offence you may find in what the prisoner has said."

"So be it," said the lieutenant; "you are taking upon yourself a twofold obligation. It will be a fight to the last gasp, for I have to exact vengeance for my brother-in-law and myself. Bear in mind, that when you pick up my glove, you pick up also Ordener Guldenlew's."

"Lieutenant Ahlefeld," responded Ordener, "you take the part of the absent with an ardor which is a proof of your generosity of mind. Can you not find it in your heart to be merciful to an unhappy old man, whom adversity has in some degree given the right to be unjust?"

Ahlefeld was one of those whose virtues blossom in the light of praise. He pressed Ordener's hand, and drew near to Schumacker, who in the exhaustion caused by his explosions of wrath had fallen back on the stone, and into the arms of the tearful Ethel.

"My lord Schumacker," said the officer, "you have taken advantage of your old age, and I perhaps was about to pre-

sume upon my youth, if you had not found a champion. I came to your prison this morning for the last time, with the object of informing you that henceforth you were to be left unguarded in the donjon, in accordance with the viceroy's orders. Now accept this good news from an enemy's mouth."

"Leave me," said the old captive, in a hollow voice.

The lieutenant bowed and obeyed, not a little pleased within himself at having won a look of approval from Ordener. Schumacker remained for some time with folded arms and bended head, plunged in revery. All at once he looked up at Ordener, who was standing silently before him.

"Well?" he said.

"My lord count, Dispolsen was assassinated."

The old man's head fell upon his breast. Ordener went on.

"The assassin was a notorious brigand, Hans of Iceland."

"Hans of Iceland!" said Schumacker.

"Hans of Iceland!" repeated Ethel.

"He plundered the captain," continued Ordener.

"In that case," said the old man, "you have heard nothing of an iron box, sealed with the Griffenfeld arms?"

"No, my lord."

Schumacker let his head fall into his hands. Ordener continued, "I will bring it back to you, my lord count; you can rely upon me. The murder was done yesterday morning. Hans has fled to the North. I have a guide who knows his hiding-places, and I have often travelled through the Drontheimhus mountains. I shall catch the brigand."

Ethel turned pale. Schumacker stood up, a look of something like joy coming into his face, as if he still felt a lingering belief in human integrity.

"My noble Ordener," he said, "farewell!" Lifting one hand toward heaven, he disappeared behind the shrubbery.

When Ordener turned he saw Ethel prostrate on the moss-covered rock, looking in her pallor like an alabaster statue on a black pedestal.

“Great heavens, Ethel!” he said, hastening to her side and raising her in his arms; “what is the matter?”

“Oh,” the trembling young girl responded, in a voice that could scarcely be heard, “oh, if you really feel a little pity, to say nothing of love for me, my lord; if what you told me yesterday was not deceitfully intended; if you have not come to this prison to kill me, — then Lord Ordener, my Ordener, in the name of Heaven and in that of the angels, renounce, I beg of you, renounce your mad project! Ordener, my well-beloved Ordener,” she went on, her tears falling like rain, and her head pressed upon the young man’s breast, “make this sacrifice for me! Do not go in pursuit of that frightful demon, the brigand with whom you are so anxious to fight. In whose interest do you undertake this thing, Ordener? Tell me, whose claim could be more dear to you than that of the unhappy being whom yesterday you called your beloved bride?”

She paused, almost choked with sobs. Her hands were clasped about Ordener’s neck, and her supplicating eyes looked into his.

“My adored Ethel, you alarm yourself without need. God is on the side of good intentions, and the interest for which I make this venture is none other than your own. That iron box contains” —

“My interest,” Ethel interrupted; “have I any other interest than your life? And if you perish, Ordener, what, think you, is to become of me?”

“Why do you think that I shall be killed, Ethel?”

“Ah, you do not know that infernal brigand, Hans. Have you any idea of the monster you propose to run down? Do you realize that he has all the powers of darkness at his bidding; that he crushes towns under mountains; that with the stamp of his foot he can make the roofs of caves fall in; that with the puff of his breath he can blow out the beacon-lights along the shore; and do you think, Ordener, that you can withstand such a diabolical giant, with your tender arms and your frail sword?”

“And your prayers, Ethel, and the thought that I am fighting for you? Be assured, Ethel, that the strength and power of the brigand have been greatly exaggerated. He is a man, like other men, who deals in death until death is dealt out to him.”

“You are not willing to listen to me, then? My appeals are nothing to you? Tell me, what am I to do if you are to leave me, wandering from one peril to another, and exposing your precious life to the ravages of a monster for some imaginary interest?”

At this point the lieutenant's stories, intensified by her love and terror, came afresh into her mind; and she went on, in a voice broken with sobs, —

“I assure you, my beloved Ordener, they have deceived you who told you that this creature was nothing but a man. You ought to believe me rather than them, Ordener, for you know that I would not deceive you. A thousand times they have tried to subdue him; he has destroyed whole battalions. I only wish that these other people would tell you the truth; you would believe them, and you would not go.”

Ethel's supplications would doubtless have shattered Ordener's adventurous purpose, if his plans had not been so well matured. The words which the despairing Schumacker had let fall the night before came back to his memory, and strengthened his determination.

“I might, my dear Ethel, tell you that I was not going, and in spite of that carry out my plan; but I shall never deceive you, even to calm your fears. I repeat, I must not hesitate between your tears and your real interests. Your fortune, your happiness, perhaps your life, — yes, your life, — are at stake, my Ethel.” And he pressed her tenderly in his arms.

“And what is all that to me?” she tearfully urged. “My love, my Ordener, my joy, — you know that you are all my joy, — do not bring a certain and frightful disaster upon me, in place of slight and doubtful misfortunes. What are my fortunes and my life to me?”

“Your father’s life is also involved, Ethel.”

“My father’s?” she repeated in a low tone, turning pale, and releasing herself from his arms.

“Yes, Ethel. This brigand, suborned no doubt by the Count of Griffenfeld’s enemies, has papers in his possession, the loss of which endangers your father’s much hated life. I want to get those papers back, and your father’s life with them.”

Ethel stood for some moments pale and speechless. Her tears were dried, her breast heaved painfully, and she looked at the ground with a dulled and indifferent eye, much as a condemned prisoner might look at the axe lifted above his head.

“My father’s!” she murmured. Then she turned her eyes slowly upon Ordener. “Your undertaking is futile,” she said, “but go.”

“Oh, my noble girl,” said Ordener, straining her to his breast; “let your heart beat against mine. Generous love, I will soon return. Trust me, you shall yet be mine; I want to do this for your father, that I may worthily be his son. My Ethel, my well-beloved Ethel!”

Who can undertake to reveal the sentiments that animate a noble soul, when its inmost thoughts are comprehended by another? And when love unites two such spirits as that with an indestructible bond, who can undertake to portray their inexpressible ecstasy? Then it is that the happiness and glory of a lifetime, intensified by the charm of a generous sacrifice, seem to be concentrated into one brief moment.

“Oh, my Ordener, go, and if you do not come back, hopeless sorrow always kills. That melancholy consolation remains to me.”

They stood up together, and Ordener drew Ethel’s arms within his own, and her beloved hand in his. Thus they silently traversed the winding paths of the deeply shaded garden, and regretfully reached the tower gate which formed the exit. There Ethel drew a small pair of golden scissors from her bosom, and severed a lock of her beautiful black hair.

“Take this, Ordener ; let it go with you and be more fortunate than I.”

With the fervor of a worshipper, Ordener pressed this token from his well-beloved to his lips.

“Ordener,” she went on, “think of me, and I shall pray for you. In the sight of God, my prayers perhaps will be as helpful as your weapons in your conflict with the demon.”

Before this angelic utterance Ordener bowed his head. His heart was so full that his emotions found no outlet in speech. They remained for some time heart to heart. At the moment of parting with her, perhaps forever, Ordener enjoyed with melancholy rapture the happiness of holding his Ethel once more in his arms. Finally, pressing a long and adoring kiss upon the sweet young girl’s pale forehead, he sprang hurriedly through the gloomy archway of the winding staircase, and as he descended caught the sorrowful and tender accents of the word “Farewell !”

CHAPTER X.

Thou would'st not leave her wretched; outward eyes
 Would hail her happy.
 They've decked her form in purple and in pall;
 When she goes forth, the thronging vassals kneel,
 And bending pages bear her foot-cloth well.
 No eye beholds that lady in her bower;
 That is her hour of joy, for then she weeps,
 Nor does her husband hear.

.
 I am that wretch,
 The wife of a most noble, honored lord,
 The mother of a babe whose smiles do stab me.

MATURIN: *Bertram.*

THE Countess of Ahlefeld passed from a sleepless night to a sleepless day. Half reclining on a sofa, she dwelt in fancy upon the bitter after-taste of illicit pleasures, upon the crime which stabs the life with passions that have no happiness in them and with sorrows that have no consolation. She was thinking of Musdœmon, who in her guilty illusions had been so seductive a figure in time gone by, and who, now that she had come to recognize the ugliness of his soul, was so revolting to her. The miserable woman wept, not at the deceit that had been practised upon her, but that she was no longer capable of deception; with regret, not with repentance; and so her tears brought no solace with them. At this moment the door opened; she wiped her eyes quickly, and looked up angrily at the intrusion, for she had given orders to be left alone. Her wrath changed to terror when she saw Musdœmon, but her fears were in part allayed when she perceived that he was accompanied by her son Frederic.

“Mother,” exclaimed the lieutenant, “how is it that you

are here? I thought that you were at Bergen. Have our fair ladies revived the custom of travelling everywhere?"

The countess greeted Frederic with embraces, to which, like all spoiled children, he responded but coldly. That was perhaps the most grievous of punishments for the unfortunate mother to endure. Frederic was her adored son, the only being in the world towards whom she felt any degree of disinterested affection; for it often happens that in the most debased of women the instinct of the mother remains when the duties of wifedom are ignored.

"I perceive, my son, that, as soon as you knew that I was at Drontheim, you hastened at once to see me."

"Oh, great heavens, no. I was bored to death at the fortress, so I came over to town, and I met Musdœmon, who brought me here." The poor mother sighed deeply. "All the same," Frederic went on, "I am very glad to see you, mother. You can tell me if they are still wearing knots of pink ribbon around the bottom of the waistcoat at Copenhagen. Did you think to bring me a vial of Oil of Youth for whitening the skin? I hope you didn't forget a translation of the latest romance, or the gold lace I asked you to get for my flame-colored housecoat, or the little combs that they put under curls to keep the ringlets in place, or" —

The wretched woman had brought nothing to her son but all the love that she had in the world.

"My dear son, I have been ill, and my sufferings have prevented me from thinking of your desires."

"You have been ill, mother? Well, you are all right now, aren't you? By the way, how is my pack of Norman hounds getting on? I dare swear they've forgotten to give my monkey his nightly bath of rose-water. You see if I don't find my Bilbao parrot dead when I go back. When I'm away, nobody looks after my pets."

"At any rate, your mother thinks of you, my son," she said, in faltering tones. If it had been the inexorable hour when the destroying angel casts the souls of sinners to eternal tor-

ment, even he would have had pity upon the agony which at this moment rent the unfortunate mother's heart. Musdœmon stood laughing in a corner.

"My lord Frederic," he said, "I see that the steel blade is not left to rust in the iron scabbard. You do not propose to get out of touch with Copenhagen fashions, even though you may be shut up in Munckholm towers. But be kind enough to let me know what Oil of Youth, and pink ribbons, and little combs amount to, of what use these warlike appurtenances can be, if the only feminine fortress at Munckholm is impregnable."

"On my honor, 'tis so," responded Frederic merrily. "Certainly, if I have failed, General Schaack himself would not succeed. But how can one surprise a fort where no point is left vulnerable, and where the guard is never off duty? What is to be done with a bodice that shows nothing but the neck; with sleeves that hide the whole arm, so that nothing but the face and hands are left to prove that the young lady is not as black as the Emperor of Mauritania? My dear preceptor, you would be nothing but a pupil. Believe me, the fort is impregnable when modesty is in command of the garrison."

"Ah, really!" said Musdœmon. "But may not modesty be forced to capitulate, when love makes the assault, and one is not limited to a little siege of small attentions?"

"No use, my dear fellow. Love has made an entry, but only to re-enforce modesty."

"Ah, sir Frederic, this is news. If love is on your side" —

"And who told you, Musdœmon, that he was?"

"On whose side, then?" exclaimed Musdœmon and the countess, the latter having until then listened in silence; but the lieutenant's words had recalled Ordener to her mind. Frederic was about to reply with a piquant tale of the nocturnal interview, when he suddenly thought of the law of courtesy and the silence that it imposed, and his gayety changed to embarrassment.

“My faith,” he said, “I don’t know on whose — but some rustic fellow perhaps — some vassal ” —

“Some soldier of the garrison ?” said Musdæmon, with an outburst of laughter.

“What, my son,” exclaimed the countess, “are you sure that she is in love with a peasant, a vassal ? How fortunate if that is really so !”

“Oh, yes, I am sure enough of it. It’s not a soldier of the garrison,” the lieutenant added, with an expression of annoyance. “But I am sure enough of what I tell you to entreat you, my dear mother, to put an end to my entirely useless exile in that cursed castle.”

An expression of pleasure had come into the face of the countess when she learned of the young girl’s fall. The haste made by Ordener Guldenlew to get to Munckholm now appeared to her in wholly different colors. She awarded the honors of the affair to her son.

“You must give us the details regarding Ethel Schumacker’s love-affairs without delay, Frederic. I am not surprised, since the daughter of a boor could only love a boor. Meanwhile, waste no curses on the castle, since it led yesterday to the honor of having a certain personage take the first steps towards making your acquaintance.”

“How is that, mother ?” said the lieutenant, opening his eyes, “what personage ?”

“Let us be serious, my son. Did no one make you a visit yesterday ? You see that I keep myself informed.”

“My faith, better than I, mother. Devil take me, if I saw any faces yesterday except the masks under the cornices in the old towers !”

“How, Frederic ; you saw no one ?”

“No one, mother, truly.”

In omitting to speak of his donjon adversary, Frederic was obeying the law of silence ; and, aside from that, could such a churl count for anybody ?

“What,” said the mother, “did not the viceroy’s son visit Munckholm last night ?”

"The viceroy's son!" said the lieutenant, laughing loudly. "It must be, mother, that you are dreaming or joking."

"Neither one nor the other, my son. Who was officer of the guard yesterday?"

"I was, mother."

"And you did not see Baron Ordener?"

"No, indeed," responded the lieutenant.

"But remember, my son, that he probably made his visit incognito, and that you have never seen him, as you were brought up at Copenhagen, while he passed his youth at Drontheim. Remember what has been said about his caprices, and his liking for a wandering life. Are you sure, my son, that you saw no one?"

Frederic hesitated a moment. "No," he exclaimed, "no one! I can make no other reply."

"In that case," responded the countess, "we must believe that the baron did not go to Munckholm."

Musdæmon, who at first had been as much surprised as Frederic was, had listened attentively. He interrupted the countess.

"Permit me, noble lady. Sir Frederic, be kind enough to let us know the name of the vassal whom Schumacker's daughter loves." He repeated his question, for Frederic had suddenly become quite thoughtful and had not heard it.

"I don't know — or rather — no, I don't know."

"Then, how do you know that she is in love with a vassal?"

"Did I say so? A vassal? Well, yes, a vassal."

The embarrassment which overcame the lieutenant was increased. The question, the ideas that it had aroused in him, and the obligation to keep silence, involved him in a tangle in which he was likely to lose his head.

"By my faith, good Musdæmon, and you, my noble mother, if questioning is the fashion, amuse yourselves by interrogating one another. As for me, I have nothing more to say."

And quickly opening the door he disappeared, leaving them wallowing in an abyss of conjecture. He descended with all speed to the courtyard, for he heard Musdœmon's voice calling to him to come back. He sprang on his horse, and rode towards the quay, with the purpose of taking boat for Munckholm, where he hoped he might perhaps still find the stranger who had brought into a condition of profound reflection one of the most frivolous brains of the most frivolous of cities.

"If it were really Ordener Guldenlew," he said to himself; "in that case my poor Ulrica — but no; it is impossible that any one should be so absurd as to prefer the dowerless daughter of a state prisoner to the wealthy daughter of an all-powerful minister. However that may be, Schumacker's daughter is nothing but a fancy, and nothing prevents one who has a wife from having a mistress at the same time, — that, in fact, is the proper thing. But no, it cannot be Ordener. The viceroy's son would not wear a shabby waistcoat; and that old, black, buckleless, weather-worn plume; and that big cloak, that might be used for a tent; and the dishevelled hair, combless and curlless; and those iron-spurred boots, stained with mud and dust! It cannot possibly be he. Baron Thorvick is a knight of Dannebrog; this stranger wears no decoration. If I were a knight of Dannebrog I should wear the collar of the order even in bed. Oh, no; he did not even know anything about *Clélie*. No; it is not the viceroy's son."

CHAPTER XI.

If man could still retain the ardor of impulse, after he had been enlightened by experience; if he could derive profit from the passage of years, without bending under their weight, — he would never scoff at the nobler virtues, which invariably have their elemental basis in self-sacrifice. — MME. DE STAËL: *Germany*.

“WELL, who is it? You, Poël? Who sent you up here?”

“His excellency forgets that he himself just gave me the order.”

“Yes?” said the general. “Ah, it was to get you to give me that box.”

Poël handed over the box, which the governor might have got for himself by extending his arm. His excellency put it down in an indifferent way, without opening it, and then began to turn over some papers, without apparently paying much attention to what he was doing.

“Poël, I also wanted to ask you — what time is it?”

“Six o’clock,” responded the valet; and the general had a clock right before his eyes.

“I wanted to say to you, Poël — what is the news in the palace?”

The general went on turning over his papers, and in an abstracted way writing a few words on each document.

“Nothing, your excellency, except that my noble master has not yet arrived, and I see that the general is uneasy about him.”

The general got up from his big desk, and looked at Poël with some irritation.

“You don’t see straight, Poël. I, uneasy about Ordener!

I know why he is absent; I do not expect him yet." General Levin de Knud was so jealous of his authority that it would seem to him to be compromised if a subordinate had been able to divine any of his inner thoughts, and to get the idea that Ordener had been acting without his orders.

"Poël," he went on, "you may retire." The valet went out. "'Tis true," exclaimed the governor, when left to himself; "Ordener takes advantage of my indulgence. When the blade is bent too far, it breaks. To make me pass a sleepless and worried night, to expose General Levin to the sarcasm of the chancellor's office and a servant's conjectures, and all this that his ancient enemy may get the first embraces which he owes to an old friend! Ordener, Ordener, caprice is death to liberty! Let him come, only let him make his appearance, and devil take me if I don't receive him as powder takes to fire! To expose the governor of Drontheim to a servant's conjectures and to the sarcasm of the chancellor's office — let him come!"

The general went on annotating his papers without reading them, in the preoccupation of his ill humor.

"My general, my noble father!" exclaimed a well-known voice.

Ordener threw his arms about the old man, who did not even try to repress a cry of joy.

"Ordener, my dear fellow! By Jove, how glad I am!" He remembered his anger, and cut short the sentence. "I am delighted, my lord, to find that you know how to repress your emotions. You seem to be glad to see me again, but it was doubtless by way of penance that you imposed upon yourself the obligation of not seeing me until twenty-four hours after you arrived."

"My father, you have often told me that an unfortunate enemy ought to have the preference over a fortunate friend. I come from Munckholm."

"By all means," said the general, "when the enemy's misfortune is pressing. But Schumacker's future" —

“Is more imperilled than ever. Noble general, an odious plot is being hatched against the unfortunate man. Those who were once his friends are pledged to bring about his ruin. And now his hereditary enemy desires to save him.”

The general, whose features had softened little by little, now interrupted Ordener.

“Very well, my dear Ordener. But what is it you mean? Schumacker is under my protection. Who are these people, and what are the plots?”

Ordener was not at all able to respond definitely to the question. He had only the vaguest ideas and very ill-defined suspicions regarding the situation of the man for whom he was going to risk his life. Many people would believe that he was acting foolishly, but youth does what it thinks to be right by instinct and not through calculation; and moreover, in a world where prudence is so sterile and wisdom so ironical, who will deny that generosity and folly are synonymous? Everything is relative here on earth, and finite conditions limit everything. Virtue would be the supremest of absurdities, if behind men there were not a God. Ordener was at the age when one believes and is believed. He ventured his life with perfect self-confidence. And the general was willing to accept from him reasons which could not have withstood a formal argument.

“What plots, and what men, my good father? In a few days I shall have cleared up the whole matter. Then you will know all that I know. I shall leave to-night.”

“What,” exclaimed the old man; “you will allow me only a few hours. But why are you going, and where are you going, my dear son?”

“You have sometimes permitted me, my dear father, to perform a worthy deed in secret.”

“Yes, my brave Ordener; but you are going away without any too clear a motive, and you know what an important matter requires your attention.”

“My father gave me a month for reflection; I shall devote

it to the interests of another. A good deed gives good counsel. When I come back, we shall see."

"What," replied the general solicitously; "is the marriage displeasing to you? They say that Ulrica Ahlefield is so beautiful! Tell me, have you seen her?"

"I believe I have," said Ordener; "if I remember rightly, she is quite beautiful."

"Well?" responded the governor.

"Well," said Ordener, "she will never be my wife."

This cold and decisive speech was a heavy blow to the general. The suspicions suggested by the haughty countess came again to his mind.

"Ordener," he said, with a shake of his head, "I ought to be wise, for I have been a sinner. Well, I am an old fool! Ordener, the prisoner has a daughter" —

"Oh, general," exclaimed the young man, "I wanted to speak to you about her. I ask your protection, my father, for that helpless and ill-used young girl."

"Of a truth," said the governor seriously, "your entreaties are not lacking in warmth."

"Why should they be," said Ordener, recovering himself a little, "when they concern an unfortunate prisoner, who is in peril, not only of her life, but what is much more precious, her honor?"

"Life! Honor! Why, I am governor here, and I am ignorant of any such horrors! Explain yourself."

"My noble father, the life of Schumacker and that of his defenceless daughter are menaced by an infernal plot."

"You make a serious accusation. What proof have you?"

"The eldest son of a powerful family is at this moment at Munckholm. He is there to accomplish the seduction of the Countess Ethel. He told me so himself."

The general recoiled in horror. "Good God, that poor defenceless girl! Why, Ordener, Ethel and Schumacker are under my protection! Who is the scoundrel? Of what family?"

“The Ahlefeld family.”

“Ahlefeld,” said the old governor; “yes, the thing is clear enough, Lieutenant Frederic is still at Munckholm. My noble Ordener, they want you to make an alliance with that race! I can understand your repugnance.”

The old man folded his arms and remained for a few moments plunged in thought; then he came up to Ordener, and put his arms about him.

“Young man, you may go. Your friends shall not lack for protection. I will look after them. Yes, go; what you do is always right. Perhaps you know that the diabolical Countess of Ahlefeld is here?”

“The noble, the Countess of Ahlefeld,” said the usher, as he opened the door.

“Hearing this name, Ordener involuntarily withdrew to the end of the room, and the countess entered without seeing him.

“My lord general,” she exclaimed, “your ward is deceiving you. He has not been to Munckholm.”

“Ah, indeed!” said the general.

“Indeed, ’tis so; my son Frederic, who is just leaving the palace, was officer of the guard at the donjon yesterday, and saw no one.”

“Indeed, my lady?” responded the general.

“In that case,” the countess went on, with a smile of triumph, “you may give up expecting Ordener.”

“To tell the truth, I have given up expecting him, lady countess,” said the governor gravely and coldly.

“General,” said the countess, turning around, “I thought that we were alone. Who is” —

The countess fixed an inquiring look upon Ordener, who bowed.

“Really,” she continued, “I only saw him once, but, except for the costume, I might take him for — why, general, is it the viceroy’s son?”

“The same, noble lady,” said Ordener, with another bow.

"In that case," said the countess smilingly, "permit an acquaintance, who will soon be in a more intimate relation with you, to ask you where you were yesterday, my lord count."

"My lord count!" I believe I have not yet had the misfortune to lose my noble father, lady countess."

"That, indeed, is far from what I meant to imply. 'Tis better to become a count by taking a wife, than by losing a father."

"One method is no more to be desired than the other, noble lady."

The countess was a little put out, but she passed off her irritation with a laugh.

"It seems that they have told me true. His excellency is very outspoken. He will be more diplomatic in the presence of ladies, when Ulrica Ahlefeld puts the chain of the Order of the Elephant around his neck."

"A chain, indeed!" said Ordener.

"You will find, General Levin," the countess went on, her laughter changing to embarrassment, "that your intractable ward will not be any the more willing to accept a colonelcy from a lady's hand."

"You are right, lady countess," Ordener replied. "A man who wears a sword should not owe his epaulets to a petticoat."

The great lady's expression was one of supreme annoyance.

"Oh, well; from whence do you come, my lord baron? Is it true that your excellency did not go yesterday to Munckholm?"

"My lady, I am not accustomed to make an answer to every question that is put to me. General, we shall see each other again."

Then, pressing the old man's hand, and bowing to the countess, he went out, leaving the lady, who was overwhelmed with her ignorance, alone in the presence of the governor, who was indignant at the information he had secured.

CHAPTER XII.

The fellow that sits next him now, parts bread with him, and pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest man to kill him.

— SHAKESPEARE: *Timon of Athens*.

IF the reader will now transport himself to the narrow and stony road leading from Drontheim to Skongen, along Drontheim bay to the hamlet of Vygla, he will not fail to hear the footsteps of two travellers, who left Skongen at nightfall, and rapidly ascended the terraced hills up which the Vygla road winds serpent-fashion.

Both are wrapped in cloaks. One walks with a firm and youthful step, with body erect and head uplifted; the end of a sword extends below the edge of his cloak, and in spite of the darkness a plume can be seen waving on his cap in the wind. The other is a little taller than his companion, but stoops slightly. There is a hump on his back, caused probably by a knapsack, which is hidden by a big black cloak, the ragged edges of which declare that it has given good and faithful service. The only weapon he carries is a long stick, which he uses to help on his uncertain and hasty footsteps.

If the darkness prevents the reader from distinguishing the features of the two travellers, he will recognize them, perhaps, by the conversation which one of them begins, after an hour of silent and wearisome journeying.

“Master, my young master! We have reached the point whence we can see Vygla tower and Drontheim steeples. There before us, that black mass on the horizon, is the tower; behind us is the cathedral, whose buttresses, darker than the heavens, stand forth like the skeleton of a mammoth.”

“Is Vygla far from Skongen?” asked the other pedestrian.

"We have yet to pass through Ordals, my lord. We shall not reach Skongen before three o'clock in the morning."

"What hour is that just striking?"

"Great heavens, master, you alarm me. Why, that must be Drontheim clock, and the wind brings the sound this way. That means a storm. The north-west wind carries clouds with it."

"Yes; the stars behind us have all disappeared."

"Let us hasten, my noble lord, I beg of you. The storm is coming, and perhaps the mutilation of Gill's body and my flight have already been discovered in the town. Let us hasten."

"Willingly. Old man, your burden seems to be heavy; let me take it, for I am young and more vigorous than you."

"No, no, my noble master. 'Tis not for the eagle to carry the turtle's shell. I am not worthy to have my knapsack borne by you."

"Why, yes, old man, if it wearies you. It seems to be heavy. What does it contain? Just now, when you stumbled, it rang like iron."

"Rang like iron, master?" said the old man, drawing quickly away from his young companion. "Oh, no; you are mistaken. It contains nothing,—nothing, that is, but food and clothing. No, it does not tire me, my lord."

The well-meaning suggestion which the young man had made seemed to have caused a good deal of alarm in the mind of his aged comrade, and the latter strove hard to conceal his emotion.

"Very well," the youth responded, without insisting; "if you don't find the burden tiresome, why, keep it."

The old man calmed down at this, but took pains to change the topic of conversation.

"'Tis a melancholy experience, to travel by night as a fugitive over a road which it would be so agreeable, my lord, to traverse in the daytime, with the object of enjoying the scenery. On the shores of the bay, at our left, you would

find Runic stones in abundance; and you would be able to study the inscriptions, which, as tradition has it, were inscribed on them by gods and giants. To the right, behind the rocks bordering the road, is the salt marsh of Skjold, which doubtless has a subterranean connection with the sea; for the sea-worm is found there,—a peculiar fish, which, as your humble servant and guide has discovered, gets its nourishment from the sand. In Vygla tower, which we are approaching, Vermond, the pagan king, burned the breasts of St. Etheldera, the glorious martyr, with wood from the true cross, brought to Copenhagen by Olahus III., and captured by the Norwegian king. 'Tis said that since that time they have vainly endeavored to transform the ill-omened tower into a chapel. Every cross that is put up on it is struck by lightning and destroyed."

At this moment a formidable flash illuminated the bay, the hill, the rocks, and the tower, and disappeared before the eyes of the two travellers could take in any one of these objects. They paused instinctively as the flash was followed in quick succession by a violent clap of thunder, which went echoing from cloud to cloud overhead, and from rock to rock along the earth.

They looked up. The stars were hidden by great clouds, that swept rapidly by one after another, and the storm seemed to be gathering above them with the force of an avalanche. The fierce wind which was carrying the masses of vapor along had not yet got low enough to touch the treetops, which stood motionless, and untouched by a drop of rain. Far above them they could hear the roaring of the tempest, which, with the noise made by the waters of the bay, was the only sound that arose in the darkness of a night whose obscurity was made yet more impenetrable by the gloom of the impending outburst.

The tumultuous silence was suddenly interrupted by a sort of roar close by the two travellers, which greatly startled the old man.

"All-powerful God!" he exclaimed, seizing the young man's arm, "'tis the laugh of the devil riding on the storm, or the voice of" —

Another flash of lightning and another thunder peal cut short his words. As if it had been awaiting the signal, the storm began violently. The two travellers wrapped their cloaks closely about them to protect themselves, not only against the rain, which was falling from the clouds in torrents, but from the thick flying dust, which the furious wind had lifted from the dry earth like a whirlwind.

"Old man," said the youth, "the lightning just showed me Vyglá tower upon our right; let us leave the road and seek shelter there."

"Shelter in the accursed tower!" exclaimed the old man. "May St. Hospitius guard us! Remember, young master, that the tower is deserted."

"So much the better, old man; we shall not have to wait at the door."

"Remember the desecration it has suffered!"

"Oh, well, perhaps our presence will purify it. Come on, old man; follow me. I assure you that on such a night as this I would seek hospitality in a robber's cave."

Then, in spite of the old man's remonstrances, he seized the arm of his companion, and went toward the building, which in the almost continuous flashes of lightning they could see standing close by. As they approached, they saw a light shining through one of the loopholes.

"You can see," said the young man, "that the tower is not deserted. You will be more disposed to enter now."

"In the name of the good God!" exclaimed the old man, "where are you leading me, master? St. Hospitius forbid that I should enter that demon's oratory!"

They were at the foot of the tower. The younger man knocked vehemently at the new door of the awe-inspiring ruin.

"Be calm, old man. Some pious cenobite has sanctified this desecrated shrine by making his dwelling there."

"No," said his companion; "I will not go in. Believe me, no hermit can live here, unless he uses one of Beelzebub's seven chains for his rosary."

Meanwhile the light had descended from loophole to loophole, and now shone through the keyhole of the door.

"You come late, Nychol!" called a shrill voice. "They set up the gallows at midday, and six hours are enough to get from Skongen to Vygla. Did you have more than your accustomed task?"

With the launching of this question the door opened; and the woman who stood there, seeing two strangers instead of the visitor she expected, uttered a cry of alarm and menace, and started back two or three steps.

The appearance of the woman was not in itself very reassuring. She was tall; and in her upstretched arm she held an iron lamp above her head, the light falling strongly upon her face. Her livid, thin, and angular features made her seem almost cadaverous, and from her sunken eyes flashed sinister rays, like those of a funeral torch. She wore a scarlet serge skirt, that did not hide her naked feet, which had reddish stains upon them. Her withered breast was but half-covered by a man's coat of the same color, of which the sleeves had been cut off at the elbow. The wind, coming in through the open door, tossed up her long gray hair, in spite of a strip of bark she wore to hold it in place, and thus gave a still more savage expression to her grim countenance.

"My good woman," said the younger of the travellers, "the rain is falling in torrents, you have a roof, and we have money."

His aged companion caught hold of his cloak, and said in an undertone, —

"Oh, master, this is imprudent! If we are not at the devil's house, 'tis at least some bandit's hiding-place. Gold will be our destruction, not our salvation."

"Hush," said the young man; and taking a purse from his doublet he let the woman see that it was well filled, and repeated his application. The woman, recovering a little from

her surprise, looked from one to the other with wild and penetrating glances.

“Strangers,” she at length exclaimed, as if she had not heard what they had been saying, “have your guardian angels deserted you? Who is it you seek for among the dwellers in the accursed tower? Strangers, ’tis no man that pointed out these ruins as an asylum; for every one would have said to you, ‘better endure the lightning and the tempest than venture to the fireside at Vygla tower.’ The only living creature that can enter here enters no other human dwelling, quits his solitude only to destroy, and lives only that he may kill. The curses of mankind are his inspiration, he ministers to them as an instrument of vengeance, and he exists only because of their crimes; and the vilest scoundrel, when the hour of punishment arrives, vents on him a portion of the universal contempt, not failing to add a little of his own. Strangers, — for such you are, since your feet have not yet in prophetic horror crossed the threshold of this tower, — trouble no longer the wolf and her litter. Go back to the road, where men like you are wont to travel; and if you would not be avoided by your kind, never let them know that the light of the dwellers of Vygla tower has fallen upon your faces.”

At these words she pointed to the door, and moved toward the two travellers. The old man trembled in every limb, and looked entreatingly at his young companion, who, not having been able to understand the woman’s speech because of her extreme volubility, believed her to be mad; and more than that, he did not feel at all willing to go out again into the rain, which continued to fall in rushing torrents.

“By my faith, good woman, you have just described to us a peculiar person, with whom I desire not to lose the opportunity of making acquaintance.”

“Acquaintance with him, young man, is soon made, sooner ended. If your evil genius will not be appeased, go and commit a murder or desecrate a corpse.”

“Desecrate a corpse!” the old man repeated in a trembling voice, hiding himself in his companion’s shadow.

“I have but a vague idea of what you mean to suggest,” said the young man, “and a quicker way will be to stay here. One would be mad indeed to pursue a journey in such weather.”

“But madder yet,” the old man murmured, “to seek shelter from such weather in such a place.”

“Ill-fated wretch,” the woman exclaimed, “seek no admittance at this door, lest you find it the door to a tomb.”

“Though the door of the tomb opened to me with yours, woman, it shall not be said that I drew back at a warning word. My sword shall be my guardian. Come, close the door, for the wind is cold; and here is money.”

“Pooh, what is your money to me?” the woman responded. “’Tis precious in your hands, but in mine it would be base metal. Well, then, remain for gold, if you will have it so; for gold can protect you from stormy skies, if it cannot save you from human scorn. Stay then, since you reward hospitality more profitably than a murder does. Wait here a moment for me, and give me your gold. Yes, ’tis the first time that a man’s hands have come here laden with gold, without being stained with blood.”

Putting down the lamp, and making fast the door, she disappeared up the archway of a dark staircase at the back of the room.

While the old man shivered, and, invoking the glorious St. Hospitius by every name, cursed in a low voice the imprudence of his young companion, the latter took up the light, and started to walk through the great circular apartment in which they found themselves. As he approached the farther wall he shuddered at what he saw; and the old man, who had followed him with his eyes, cried aloud, —

“Great God, master, a gallows!”

And in truth a tall gallows leaned against the wall, and reached to the summit of the black and dripping arch.

"Yes," said the young man; "and here are wood and iron saws, chains, pillories, a trestle, and great pincers hanging above it."

"By all the saints in paradise," the old man exclaimed, "where are we?"

"Here is a coil of hempen rope," said the young man, methodically continuing his investigation; "here are furnaces and kettles; this part of the wall is hung thickly with nippers and scalpels; here are leather scourges armed with steel points, an axe, and a club."

"'Tis no other than hell's storehouse!" the old man interrupted, horrified at this formidable catalogue.

"Here," the young man went on, "are copper tubes, bronze-toothed wheels, a box of big nails, a screw-jack. These are in truth sinister furnishings. You may well be wrathful at my impatience in bringing you here with me."

"Ah, you agree to that, then!" said the old man, more dead than alive.

"Don't be alarmed; what matters the place you may be in, so long as I am with you?"

"A noble protector," the old man murmured, whose terror began to weaken the fear and respect he had felt for his young companion; "a sword thirty inches long against a gallows thirty cubits high!"

The tall red woman once more made her appearance, and, taking up the iron lamp, signed to the travellers to follow her. Feeling their way carefully, they ascended a narrow, worn staircase, that had been built within the limits of the tower wall. At every loophole, a blast of wind and rain threatened to extinguish the trembling lamp-flame; but the hostess guarded it with her long, thin hands. They stumbled more than once over loose stones, which the old man's alarmed imagination pictured as human bones strewn upon the staircase; and then they came to the second floor of the building into a round chamber, similar to that on the floor below. In the middle space, in accordance with the Gothic style of

building, a great fire was burning; and the smoke, after more or less permeating the atmosphere, escaped through an opening in the ceiling overhead. It was through this opening that the firelight, united with that from the iron lamp, had cast the illumination seen by the two travellers from the road. A spit, bearing a piece of fresh meat, was turning before the fire.

“On this abominable hearth,” said the old man to his companion, with a gesture of horror, “a portion of a saint’s body was burned with pieces of the true cross.”

A roughly made table stood at some distance from the fireplace. The woman invited the travellers to seat themselves there.

“Strangers,” she said, placing the lamp before them, “supper will soon be ready; and my husband will be sure to hasten his return, for fear that the spirit of darkness, in passing the accursed tower, may carry him off.”

At this point Ordener — for the reader has no doubt already guessed the identity of the young man, and of his guide, Benignus Spiagudry — had opportunity to examine at his ease the peculiar disguise with which the old man had adorned himself, through fear of being recognized and detained, and upon the details of which he had expended all the resources of a fertile imagination. The poor fugitive had exchanged his reindeer-skin clothing for a full suit of black, left formerly at the Spladgest by a celebrated Drontheim grammarian, who had drowned himself in despair at not being able to find out why “Jupiter” takes “Jovis” in the genitive. His wooden shoes had given place to big postilion’s boots, that had become much worn by friction against the horses’ sides, and in which the scant legs of the present wearer took so slight a hold that he would not have been able to walk in them at all if he had not stuffed them with half a bunch of hay. His bald head was concealed by an immense wig, which had once belonged to a young French dandy, who had been waylaid and murdered at Drontheim

gates, and this covering rippled down over his sharp and uneven shoulders. One of his eyes was covered with a plaster; and thanks to a jar of cosmetic, which he had found in the pocket of an old maid, dead from unreciprocated love, his pale and wrinkled cheeks were tinted to an unwonted vermilion, an adornment which the rain had carried down to the end of his chin. Before he seated himself, he had carefully removed the knapsack from his back and put it beneath him; and, wrapping himself up in his old cloak, he paid no attention to the gaze of his companion, but watched with painful scrutiny the roast which the hostess was supervising, and which he seemed to regard with disquietude and horror. Now and then disjointed phrases fell from his lips. "Human flesh — *horrendas epulas* — anthropophagi! A Moloch's feast — *ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet!* What place is this? Atreus! Druidess! Irmen-sul! The devil crushed Lycaon with a thunderbolt!" Here he broke off a moment, and then exclaimed, "Great heavens! God have mercy! I saw a tail!"

Ordener, who had been watching him attentively, and had almost been able to follow the thread of his thoughts, could not suppress a smile.

"There's nothing very reassuring about that tail, 'tis true. Perhaps the devil is behind it."

Spiagudry did not hear this sally; his gaze was fixed upon the other side of the room. He shuddered, and leaned over to Ordener's ear.

"Master, look across there to the other side, at the heap of straw in the shadow" —

"Well, what of it?" asked Ordener.

"Three naked and motionless corpses, the bodies of three children!"

"There's a knock at the tower door," exclaimed the red woman, as she knelt at the fireplace.

The noise of three heavy strokes, the last two the loudest of all, echoed through the fury of the increasing storm.

“ ’Tis he, at last, — ’tis Nychol ! ” said the hostess, seizing the lamp, and hurrying down the stairs.

The two travellers had no opportunity to resume their conversation before they heard a confused murmur of voices in the room below ; and these words reached their ears, in a tone that made Spiagudry shudder, —

“ Woman, be silent ; we will remain. Thunder will enter, though the door be closed.”

“ Master, master,” said Spiagudry, in a whisper, “ misfortune comes ! ”

The sound of footsteps was heard upon the stairs ; and two men in clerical garb entered the apartment, followed by the alarmed hostess.

One of the men was rather tall, and wore the black coat and close-cropped hair of a Lutheran minister. The other, who was short, wore a hermit’s robe and a cincture ; the hood was drawn down over his face, leaving only a long black beard visible ; and his hands were wholly concealed in large sleeves.

Seeing these two peaceful looking persons, Spiagudry was perceptibly relieved of the terror which the peculiar voice of one of them had aroused in him.

“ Be not alarmed, my dear woman,” the minister said to the hostess ; “ Christian priests deal kindly with their enemies ; would you expect them to be at enmity with those who are kind to them ? We humbly beseech of you to give us shelter. If the reverend doctor who accompanies me spoke sternly to you a moment ago, he was wrong in forgetting that gentleness of speech is prescribed to us by our vows. Alas, that the most saintly should sometimes fall short of holiness ! I lost my way on the road from Skongen to Drontheim, and was wandering about in the darkness and the storm, without guide or shelter. My reverend brother, whom I met, and who also was far from his own home, deigned to permit me to come with him to your dwelling. He has not hesitated to praise your hospitality fervently, my dear woman, and doubtless he was right in doing so. Do not address us in the words of the

wicked shepherd, — *Advena, cur intras?* Grant us welcome, worthy hostess, and God will preserve your harvest from the storm, and will shelter your flocks from the tempest, as you afford protection to travellers astray."

"Old man," the woman interrupted roughly; "I have neither crops nor herds."

"Ah, well, if you are poor, God sheds his blessing on the poor in preference to the rich. You will travel down the years with your husband, respected, not for your wealth, but for your virtues; your race shall increase and be esteemed of men; your children shall inherit the honors won by their father."

"Say no more!" exclaimed the hostess. "Our children will be as we are, and will grow old like us, scorned by their fellows, and burdened with the curse transmitted in our race from generation to generation. Say no more, old man. Blessings are changed to curses in falling on our heads."

"Oh, heaven!" responded the minister; "of what race are you? In what crimes do you spend your days?"

"What are crimes and what is goodness? We have at least one privilege here, we can neither commit crimes nor practise virtue."

"The woman is disordered in her wits," said the minister, turning to the little hermit, who was drying his woollen robe before the fire.

"No, priest," the woman went on; "you shall hear the truth. I would rather excite your horror than your pity. I am not mad, but the wife of" —

A prolonged and violent knocking at the tower door prevented the rest of her speech from being heard, to the great disappointment of Spiagudry and Ordener, who had been silently listening to the conversation.

"Curses be upon the lord high justice of Skongen, in forcing us to dwell in this tower, close by the highway," said the red woman, between her teeth. "Perhaps it isn't Nychol yet. After all," she continued, taking up the lamp, "if it is

another traveller, what does it matter? The stream flows on after the torrent has lost its fury."

Left to themselves, the four travellers looked at one another in the firelight. Spiagudry, who at first had been alarmed when the hermit had spoken, and then reassured at the sight of his black beard, would perhaps have begun to tremble again, if he had been conscious of the piercing scrutiny cast upon him from under the monkish hood. The minister broke the silence with a question, —

"Brother hermit, I take you to be one of the Catholic priests exiled in the last persecution, and I suppose you were returning to your retreat when I had the good fortune to meet with you. Can you tell me where we are?"

Before the hermit made any reply, the rickety door to the dismantled staircase opened.

"Nothing but a storm is needed, wife, to bring a crowd begging for a seat at our abhorrent table and for a shelter under our accursed roof."

"Nychol," the woman responded, "I could not prevent" —

"And what matters it, how many guests we have, if they only pay? Gold is as well earned in caring for a traveller's needs as in strangling a brigand."

The speaker paused before the door, and the four strangers could examine his appearance at their leisure. He was a man of colossal stature, and, like the hostess, was dressed in red serge. His enormous head seemed to spring directly from his broad shoulders, quite in contrast with the long and bony neck of his gracious spouse. His forehead was low, his nose flat, his eyebrows thick, and his eyes, surrounded by a purplish ring, blazed like fire reflected in blood. The lower part of his face was cleanly shaved, and his big wide mouth opened in a hideous grin, the black lips parting like the edges of an incurable wound. Tufts of frizzled hair hanging from his jaws gave a rectangular form to his head, when seen from the front. He wore a gray felt hat, which was dripping with rain; and he barely touched its brim with his hand, in salutation to the four travellers.

At the sight of the newcomer, Benignus Spiagudry uttered a cry of alarm; and the Lutheran minister turned away in surprise and horror, as the master of the dwelling recognized and addressed him.

"What? You here, my good minister! Truth to tell, I did not expect to have the pleasure of seeing your pitiful and frightened face a second time to-day."

The minister repressed a gesture of repugnance, and his features took on a calm and serious expression.

"And I rejoice, my son, that fortune has once more brought the shepherd to the wandering sheep, doubtless with the purpose of bringing the sheep back to the fold."

"Oho, by Haman's gallows," the other responded, with an outburst of laughter, "this is the first time that I have ever been compared to a sheep! Believe me, father, if you want to flatter the vulture, you must not call him a pigeon."

"He through whose means the vulture is made dove-like, my son, deals in consolation and not in flattery. You think that I am afraid of you, but I only pity you."

"In that case, sir priest, it must truly be that you are well supplied with pity. I might have thought that you expended it all upon that poor devil whom you confronted to-day with a crucifix, that he might not see the gallows."

"That unfortunate wretch," the priest responded, "was less to be pitied than you; for he wept, and you only laugh. Happy is he who in the moment of expiation realizes how much less powerful is the arm of man than the word of God."

"Well said, father," the host retorted, with horrible and ironic mirth. "The man who wept! That man of ours to-day has committed no other crime except that of loving the king so dearly that he could not live without making his majesty's portrait on little copper medals, and then gilding them artistically, to render them more worthy of the royal effigy. Our gracious sovereign has not been ungrateful, and has rewarded this excessive devotion with a fine hempen

rope, which, for the information of my honorable guests, I may explain, was to-day conferred upon him in the public square at Skongen by myself, the grand chancellor of the Order of the Gallows, assisted by this good gentleman here, the grand chaplain of the same order."

"Wretch, be silent!" the priest interrupted. "Shall the agent of punishment defy punishment? Listen to the thunder" —

"Ah, well, what is thunder? Satan's laugh."

"Great God, he just now looked upon death, and he blasphemes!"

"A truce to sermons, you old crazy-pate," the host exclaimed, in a loud and almost wrathful voice, "unless you would curse the angel of darkness, who twice within twelve hours has brought us together on the same vehicle and under the same roof. Pattern yourself after your comrade, the hermit, who keeps silence, since he desires greatly to get back to his cave at Lynrass. I thank you, brother hermit, for the blessing which I have seen you bestow upon the accursed tower every morning, in your journey over the hill. And yet, to tell the truth, it always seemed to me until now that you were quite tall, and that black beard to me looked white. You are the hermit of Lynrass, the sole hermit of Drontheimhus, — is it not so?"

"I am, indeed, the only one," said the hermit, in rumbling tones.

"In that case," the host responded, "we are the two loneliest men in the province. Here, Bechlie, hurry up with that quarter of lamb, for I am hungry. I was detained at Burlock by that cursed Doctor Manryll, who wanted to give me only twelve ascalins for the body. Why, that infernal old Spladgest keeper, at Drontheim, gets forty. Holloa, my good man with the wig, what's the matter? You almost fell over backwards. By the way, Bechlie, have you finished up that skeleton of the famous poisoner and magician, Orgivius? It is time it was sent to the museum of curiosities at Bergen.

Have you sent one of your little wild boars to the syndie of Lœvig, to collect what he owes me? — four double crowns, for boiling a sorceress and two alchemists, and taking the shackles which they had bewitched away from his court-room; twenty ascalins for hanging Ismaël Typhainus, the Jew, of whom the reverend bishop complained; and a crown for making a new wooden arm for the town gallows."

"The dues are still in the syndie's hands," the woman responded sharply, "because your son forgot the wooden cup to receive it in, and the judge's valet refused to put it on his naked palm."

"If their necks come under my hands," said the husband, with frowning brows, "they'll find out whether or not a wooden cup is needed to touch them. We must be easy with the syndie, though. That case of Ivar, the robber, has been referred to him. Ivar complains that he was put to the question, not by an inquisitor, but by me; and he declares that, as he had not been tried, he was not infamous. By the way, wife, don't let your little ones play with my tongs and pincers; they have got all my instruments out of order, so that to-day I couldn't do anything with them. Where are the little rascals?" the host went on, approaching the pile of straw where Spiagudry thought he had seen the three dead bodies. "Here they are, snug in bed; they sleep, in spite of the noise, as soundly as three gallows birds."

From these speeches, the horror of which contrasted with the frightful tranquillity and atrocious gayety of the one who uttered them, the reader has perhaps recognized the tenant of Vyglá tower. Spiagudry, who recognized him at his first appearance, having seen him often taking part in woeful ceremonies in Drontheim square, came near to fainting with terror, especially when he remembered the personal motive which, since the night before, made him more than ever in dread of this terrible functionary. He leaned towards Ordenér, and said, in a scarcely audible voice, —

"'Tis Nychol Orugix, the Drontheimhus executioner!"

Ordener was at first struck with horror, and tremblingly regretted that he was not out on the highway in the storm; but this feeling soon gave place to one of curiosity, and, while he sympathized with his old guide's embarrassment and alarm, he gave his entire attention to the speech and bearing of the strange creature before him, much as one listens eagerly to the growling of a hyena or the roaring of a tiger, transferred from the desert to a city street. Poor Benignus was too much distracted to give his mind to psychological observations. Hiding behind Ordener, he drew his cloak lightly about him, felt anxiously of the plaster over his eye, drew the back portion of his flowing wig over his face, and fairly gasped for breath.

Meanwhile, the hostess had served up a great platter of roasted lamb, the hind quarter still bearing its reassuring tail. The executioner took his place opposite to Ordener and Spigudry, and between the two priests; while his wife, after placing a pitcher of mead, a hunk of *rindebrod*,¹ and five wooden plates on the table, stationed herself near the fire, and gave her attention to the sharpening of her husband's notched and jagged tools.

"There, reverend minister," said Orugix, with a laugh; "the sheep offers you some lamb. And you, my good man with the wig, was it the wind that cast your headgear over your face in that way?"

"The wind — good sir, the storm" — the trembling Spigudry stammered.

"Courage, then, old man. You see that these honorable priests and I don't stand on ceremony. Tell us who you are, and who your young and taciturn companion is, and give us a little conversation. Let's get acquainted. If your talk justifies what one may expect from your appearance, you ought to be extremely entertaining."

"Our host is facetious," said the keeper, drawing up his lips, showing his teeth, and winking one eye, with a semblance of mirth. "I am nothing but a poor old man."

¹ Bread made of ground bark, eaten by the poor people of Norway.

"Yes," the jovial executioner interposed, "some old scholar, some old sorcerer."

"Oh, my good host, a scholar, yes — but a sorcerer, no !"

"So much the worse ; a sorcerer would just make up our festive Sanhedrim. My honorable guests, let us drink to the health of the venerable sage who is going to cheer up our supper. Here's to the health of the man I hanged to-day, brother preacher ! How is this, father hermit ; you refuse to drink my beer ?"

The hermit had taken from beneath his robe a large gourd, containing water clear as crystal, and from it had filled his glass.

"By the gods, hermit of Lynrass," the executioner exclaimed, "if you will not taste my beer, I shall have a sup of the water you have there."

"So be it," the hermit responded.

"Take off your glove, first, reverend father," the executioner requested. "We only pour drink with the bare hand."

"It's a vow," said the hermit, with a gesture of refusal.

"Pour on, all the same," said the executioner.

Scarcely had Orugix got the cup to his lips, when he put it quickly down, while the hermit emptied his at a draught.

"By the cup of the Crucified, reverend hermit, what is this infernal liquor ? Never have I drunk its like, since the day when I came near drowning on the voyage from Copenhagen to Drontheim. In good truth, that's no water from Lynrass spring, hermit ; that's sea-water."

"Sea-water !" Spiagudry repeated, with increasing terror, as he looked at the hermit's glove.

"Well, well," said the executioner, turning toward him with a shout of laughter, "everything seems to frighten you here, my old Absalom, even the drink of this holy cenobite, who is doing penance."

"Alas, no, my good host. But sea-water — only one man" —

"There, there, you don't know what you're talking about, venerable doctor. If you are uneasy in this company, you must have a bad conscience, or be very contemptuous in your ideas."

These words, uttered with some degree of irritation, reminded Spiagudry of the necessity for dissimulating his terror, to appease the feelings of his redoubtable host. He had recourse to his vast learning, and rallied what little presence of mind still remained to him.

"Contemptuous? I, contemptuous of you, honorable master; of you, whose presence in any province gives it the *merum imperium*;¹ of you, executor of high justice, wielder of secular vengeance, sword of uprightness, buckler of innocence; of you, whom Aristotle, in the last chapter of book six of his *Politics*, classes among the magistrates, and whose guerdon Paris of Puteo, in his treatise, *De Syndico*, fixes at five golden crowns, as witness the passage, *quinque aureos manivolto*; of you, good sir, whose colleagues at Cronstadt are awarded rank in the nobility, after they have cut off three hundred heads; of you, whose terrible but honorable functions are fulfilled proudly in Franconia by the latest bridegroom, at Rautlingen by the youngest counsellor, at Stedien by the latest installed burgess! And am I not still further aware, my good master, that your colleagues in France have the right of *havadium* over every patient at Saint-Ladre, over the swine, and over the Epiphany cakes? Why should I not have a most profound respect for you, when the Abbé of Saint-Germain-des-Pres gives you a pig's head every year on St. Vincent's Day, and has you walk at the head of the procession?"

At this point the keeper's flood of erudition was roughly cut short by the executioner.

"By my faith, this is the first news I have had of it! The learned abbé, of whom you speak, my reverend friend, has thus far defrauded me of all the delectable prerogatives

¹ The established right to have an executioner.

which you have so seductively depicted. Honorable guests," Orugix went on, "without stopping to consider the fulsome sayings of this old fool here, it is true that I have failed in my career. To-day I am nothing but the humble executioner of an obscure province. Well, I ought certainly to have attained to higher dignities than Stillison Dickoy, the famous Muscovite headsman. Would you believe me to be the same man who, twenty-four years ago, was ordered to preside at the execution of Schumacker?"

"Of Schumacker, Count of Griffenfeld?" exclaimed Ordener.

"That seems to astonish you, Master Say-nothing. Well, yes; the same Schumacker, whom, strangely enough, fortune is likely again to bring into my hands, in case it pleases the king to cancel the reprieve. Let us empty the pitcher, gentlemen, and I will tell you how it came to pass that, after making such a resplendent beginning, I have ended up so miserably.

"I was in 1676 attendant to Rhum Stuald, royal executioner at Copenhagen. When the Count of Griffenfeld was sentenced, my master had fallen ill; and thanks to certain friendly interests, I was selected to take his place on that memorable occasion. On the fifth of June, — I shall never forget that day, — aided by the master of minor duties,¹ about five o'clock in the morning, I was erecting the grand scaffold in the citadel square, and draping it in black, out of respect for the condemned. At eight o'clock the royal guard surrounded the structure, and the Schleswig Uhlans held back the crowd, which was thronging into the square. Who, in my place, would not have been intoxicated with pride! I stood erect, sabre in hand, upon the platform; every eye was fixed upon me, and at that moment I was the most important personage in the two kingdoms. 'My fortune is made,' I said; 'for without me, what would all these great lords, who have sworn to destroy the chancellor, be able to accomplish?'

¹ Builder of scaffolds.

I already saw myself appointed to the post of royal executioner at the capital, surrounded by attendants and privileges. Now the citadel clock strikes ten. The condemned man emerges from the prison, crosses the square, and mounts the scaffold, with a firm step and tranquil bearing. I want to tie back his hair; but he pushes me aside, and performs that last office for himself.

“‘It is a long time,’ he said, with a smile, to the prior of St. Andrews, ‘since I dressed my own hair.’ I offer him the black bandage; he declines it, with an expression of disdain, but he shows no scorn toward me.

“‘My friend,’ he says, ‘this is probably the first time that the two officers at the opposite extremes of the judiciary, the chancellor and the executioner, have met within so scant a space.’ Those words stick fast in my memory. He also refuses the black cushion, which I wanted to place under his knees; embraces the priest, and kneels down, after declaring his innocence in a loud voice.

“Then, with a club, I broke the shield bearing his coat of arms, proclaiming, according to custom, ‘This is not done, save for just cause!’ This ceremony shattered the count’s stolidity. He turned pale, but quickly responded, ‘What the king has given, the king has the right to take away.’ He rested his head upon the block, with his eyes turned toward the east, and I raised my sword with both hands. Listen carefully! At that moment a shout comes to my ears. ‘A pardon, in the king’s name, — a pardon for Schumacker!’ I turn around. An aide-de-camp was galloping toward the scaffold, waving a parchment. The count gets up with an expression, not so much of joy, as of satisfaction. The parchment is handed to him. ‘Just God,’ he cries, ‘imprisonment for life! This pardon is worse than death.’

“He descends, as shamefacedly as a thief, from the scaffold which he had so serenely mounted. But it was all the same to me. I did not realize then that this man’s salvation would be my ruin. After having taken down the scaffold, I re-

turned, still hopeful, to my master's house, though a little disappointed at the loss of the gold crown, which was the price for cutting off a head. That was not all. The next day I received orders of dismissal, and an appointment as the provincial executioner of Drontheimhus. Provincial executioner, and in the most remote portion of Norway!

"Now, observe, gentlemen, what momentous results may arise from the most insignificant causes. The count's enemies, in order to make a display of clemency, had so arranged matters that the reprieve should arrive a moment after the execution. They failed by just a minute; and for this they blamed my tardiness, as if it would have been decent to prevent so illustrious a personage from getting what comfort he could out of the few moments preceding the last, and as if a royal executioner could decapitate a grand chancellor with as little ceremony as a provincial hangman could string up a Jew! There was jealousy in it too. I have a brother, — and, by the way, I believe he is still living. He succeeded, by changing his name, in getting a place in the household of the new chancellor, the Count of Ahlefeld. My presence at Copenhagen was offensive to this scoundrel. My brother had no love for me, because some day it might fall to me to hang him."

Here the smooth-tongued talker paused, to give vent to his mirth, and then went on.

"You see, my dear guests, that I have reconciled myself to my trade. After all, to the devil with ambition. Here I carry on my business honestly. I sell the corpses that I get; or Bechlie cleans up the skeletons, and I sell them to the Museum of Anatomy at Bergen. I make sport of everything, even of that poor woman, who has been no better than she should be, and who is almost crazed by solitude. My three heirs are being brought up in the fear of the devil and the gallows. My name is a terror to all the little children in Drontheimhus. The syndics furnish me with a cart and red clothes. The accursed tower keeps off the rain as well as

a palace. The old priests, who are blown in here by the storm, preach to me, and the scholars flatter me. In a word, I am as happy as anybody; I drink, I eat, I hang, and I sleep."

The executioner did not reach the end of this prolonged discourse without numerous libations of beer, and noisy explosions of laughter.

"He slays and he sleeps," the minister murmured; "misguided wretch!"

"The rascal ought to be happy!" exclaimed the hermit.

"Yes, brother hermit," said the executioner, "I am poor, like you, but certainly far happier. I assure you, the trade would be a good one, if people didn't take so much pleasure in preventing me from getting my just dues. Would you believe, that, because of some fashionable wedding, the newly appointed chaplain at Drontheim has petitioned for the pardon of twelve convicts, who really ought to be turned over to me?"

"Turned over to you!" exclaimed the minister.

"Yes, of course, father. Seven of them were to be scourged, two branded on the left cheek, and three hanged, — that makes twelve altogether. Yes, there are twelve crowns and thirty ascalins that I lose, if the petition is granted. What do you think, my good friends, of a chaplain who disposes of my property? The cursed priest is named Athanasius Munder. Wouldn't I like to get hold of him!"

The minister got up, and said gently and coolly, "My son, I am Athanasius Munder."

At this speech the face of Orugix flamed with wrath, and he sprang quickly from his seat; then his angry stare met the chaplain's calm and benevolent glance, and he sat slowly down again, speechless and embarrassed. Silence followed for a moment. Ordener, who had risen from the table to defend the priest, was the first to break it.

"Nychol Orugix," he said, "here are thirteen crowns, to make good to you the loss of the pardoned convicts."

"Alas," the minister interposed, "who knows if I shall be able to obtain the pardon? I must get an audience with the viceroy's son, for everything depends upon his marriage with the chancellor's daughter."

"Reverend chaplain," the young man responded gravely, "you will secure it. Ordener Guldenlew will not receive the wedding-ring until the shackles of the bondsmen are broken."

"Young stranger, you can do nothing; but God hears and will recompense you!"

Meanwhile Ordener's thirteen crowns, joined to the priest's benevolent expression, had completely mollified Nychol, and he became quite jovial again.

"See here, reverend chaplain, you're a fine fellow, worthy to officiate at St. Hilarion's chapel. My words were stronger than my thoughts. You keep faithfully to your path, and it's no fault of yours if it crosses mine. But the one I would like to get hold of is the keeper of the morgue at Drontheim, that old sorcerer of the Spladgest. Let's see, what's his name? Splugry? Spadugry? Tell me, my learned doctor; you are a Babel of knowledge, and have all learning at your tongue's end, — can't you aid me to think of the sorcerer's name? — he is a colleague of yours. You must have met him now and then, on a demon's holiday, riding the air astride of a broomstick."

It is certain that, if poor Benignus had been able to escape at that moment upon an aerial steed of any kind, he would with the greatest pleasure have intrusted himself to so fragile and abhorrent a mode of locomotion. Love of life had never been developed so strongly in him, as it was now in his consciousness of imminent danger. Everything that met his eye was a source of alarm, — the associations connected with the accursed tower, the red woman's maddening inspection, the hermit's voice and gloves and mysterious drink, his young companion's venturesome audacity, and especially the executioner, into whose retreat he had stumbled as a fugitive with a sense of guilt upon him. He trembled so violently that any

voluntary movement was impossible, especially when the conversation turned upon his own identity, and he heard Orugix's formidable denunciation. As he had no desire whatever to imitate the priest's heroism, his stammering tongue was long in finding any response.

"Well," the executioner went on, "do you know the Spladgest keeper's name? Does your wig make you deaf?"

"Somewhat, my good master. But," he added at length, "I do not know his name, that I swear to you."

"He does not know it?" the hermit exclaimed, in his terror-inspiring voice. "The oath is false. The man's name is Benignus Spiagudry."

"What, mine! Great God!" the old man cried, in horror.

"Who said it was your name?" the executioner demanded, with an outburst of laughter. "'Tis that pagan of a keeper that we are speaking of. Of a truth, this pedagogue is frightened at nothing. What would become of him if his droll grimaces had any serious cause? It would be great sport to hang such an old fool. And so, venerable doctor," the executioner went on, delighted at his victim's terror, "you are not acquainted with Benignus Spiagudry?"

"No, master," said the keeper, somewhat reassured by this question; "I am not acquainted with him, I assure you; and since he has had the misfortune to displease you, I should be very sorry indeed to make his acquaintance at all."

"But you seem to be acquainted with him, reverend hermit?" Orugix continued.

"Yes, I know him very well," the hermit responded. "He is tall, old, thin, and bald."

Spiagudry was justly alarmed at this portrait, and hastened to rearrange his wig.

"He has long hands," the hermit went on, "as long as those of a thief who has not fallen in with a traveller for a week; he is round-shouldered," — Spiagudry did his best to stand perfectly erect, — "in fact, one might take him for one of the bodies he has charge of, if it were not for the bril-

liancy of his eyes." Spiagudry put up his hands to the protecting plaster.

"Thanks, father," said the executioner to the hermit; "I shall be able to recognize the old Jew now wherever I meet him."

Spiagudry, who was a very devoted Christian, was greatly offended at this unbearable insult, and could not repress an exclamation, —

"Jew, master!" Then he shut his mouth quickly, fearing that he had said too much.

"Ah, well, Jew or pagan, what does it matter, if he has dealings with the devil, as people say?"

"I could willingly believe that," the hermit responded, with an ironical smile that his hood did not wholly conceal, "if he were not such an arrant coward. But how could he get on friendly terms with Satan? He is as poor-spirited as he is wicked; and, when fear gets hold of him, he doesn't know what he is about."

The hermit spoke slowly, as if he were disguising his voice, and the measured way in which he uttered his words gave them an extraordinary significance.

"Doesn't know what he is about!" Spiagudry repeated to himself.

"I am sorry that such a rascal should be so cowardly," said the executioner; "he's not worth the trouble of being hated. A serpent one can fight with, but a lizard can only be crushed."

"But, my good friends," interposed Spiagudry, hazarding a few words in his own defence, "are you sure that the public official of whom you speak is such a man as you represent him to be? Has his reputation?" —

"His reputation," the hermit interposed; "he has the most abominable reputation in the whole province!"

"My good master," said Benignus, in his disappointment turning to the executioner, "what wrong has he done to you? For I suppose your hatred has some valid cause."

“You are right, old man, in that supposition. Spiagudry is in much the same trade that I am, and he does all that he can to injure me.”

“Oh, master, do not think that; or, if 'tis so, it is because he has not seen you, as I have, with your gracious wife and charming children about you, and granting the hospitality of your domestic fireside to strangers. If, like me, he had enjoyed a cordial welcome to your home circle, it would be impossible that the unfortunate man should longer be your enemy.”

Spiagudry had barely finished with this adroit speech, when the tall woman, who until then had taken no part in the discussion, stood up, and said in shrilly solemn tones, —

“The viper’s fangs are never more venomous than when they are coated with honey.”

Then she sat down again, and went on sharpening the tools, the rasping, strident sounds which accompanied the operation filling in the intervals of talk and taking the part of the chorus of a Greek tragedy, greatly to the discomfort of the four travellers’ sense of hearing.

“The woman is certainly mad!” the keeper muttered to himself, not being able to explain otherwise the ill effects of his flattery.

“Bechlie is right, my light-haired doctor!” exclaimed the executioner. “I shall look for the viper’s fangs, if you go on much longer praising Spiagudry.”

“God forbid, master,” exclaimed the other, “that I should find anything in him to praise.”

“Very well; you have little idea how far he carries his influence. Would you believe that the impudent fellow has the temerity to dispute with me my claims upon Hans of Iceland?”

“Upon Hans of Iceland?” said the hermit quickly.

“Why, yes. Are you acquainted with that famous brigand?”

“Yes,” said the hermit.

“Well, every brigand gets to the hangman,—is not that so? What does that infernal Spiagudry do? He asks that a price be put on Hans’s head.”

“Asks to have a price put on Hans’s head?” the hermit inquired.

“Yes, he has had the face to do that, and simply for the reason that the body may fall to him, and I be cheated out of my rights.”

“But this is infamous, master Orugix, to dare to dispute with you a right which is so evidently your own!” The words were accompanied by a malicious smile that alarmed Spiagudry.

“The game is all the meaner, hermit, because I have need of just such an execution as that which Hans would afford me, to bring me out of my obscurity and set me on the road to fortune, which I failed of with Schumacker.”

“Is it indeed so, master Nychol?”

“Yes, brother hermit. If you will come and see me on the day of Hans’s arrest, we will serve up a fat pig in honor of my future elevation.”

“By all means; but do you feel sure that I shall be at liberty on that day? Moreover, did you not just now despatch ambition to the devil?”

“No doubt, I did, father, when I realized that Spiagudry and an offer of head money were enough to destroy my most cherished hopes.”

“Ah,” the hermit went on, with a peculiar intonation, “Spiagudry requested the offering of head money!”

The voice had the same effect upon the poor man that a toad’s stare has on a bird.

“Oh, gentlemen,” he said, “why do you judge so rashly? That is not confirmed, and the rumor may be false.”

“The rumor may be false!” exclaimed Orugix. “The thing is only too certain. The syndics’ petition is even now at Drontheim, bearing the signature of the Spladgest keeper. They are only awaiting the governor’s decision.”

The executioner had the fact so exactly, that Spiagudry did not dare to pursue his justification. He contented himself for the hundredth time with privately cursing his young companion. But what were his emotions, when he heard the hermit, after a few moments of ostensible meditation, suddenly inquire in an ironical tone, —

“Tell me, master Nychol, what’s the punishment for sacrilege?”

These words had much the same effect upon Spiagudry as if some one had suddenly snatched off his plaster and wig. He waited anxiously for the response, which Orugix did not give until he had emptied his cup.

“That depends on the kind of sacrilege,” the executioner replied.

“If it is the desecration of a body?”

At any moment the shivering Benignus expected to hear his name uttered by the incomprehensible hermit.

“Formerly,” said Orugix coolly, “the guilty one was buried alive with the mutilated body.”

“And now?”

“Now, it is much less severe.”

“Much less severe!” said Spiagudry, scarcely daring to breathe.

“Yes,” the executioner went on, with the off-hand manner of an artist at home in his art; “first they brand him with a hot iron, with a letter S, on the plumpest part of his leg.”

“And then?” interrupted the old keeper, upon whom it would have been difficult to carry out that part of the punishment.

“Then,” said the executioner, “they are satisfied with simply hanging him.”

“Heaven have mercy,” exclaimed Spiagudry; “they hang him!”

“Well, what of it? You look at me as a convict looks at the gallows.”

“It is pleasant to find,” said the hermit, “that we have returned to humane principles.”

At that moment, the storm having subsided, they heard very distinctly outside the clear and intermittent tones of a horn.

“Nychol,” said the woman, “they are in pursuit of some criminal. That is the archers’ horn.

“The archers’ horn!” each of the men repeated in a different accent, Spiagudry with that of unmitigated terror. The exclamation had barely escaped them, when there was a knock at the tower door.

CHAPTER XIII

Given a man and a signal, and the elements of a revolution are in readiness.

Who will begin ? As soon as a standing-point is found, the turmoil is in full swing. — BONAPARTE.

LÆVIG is a large town, on the northern shore of Drontheim bay, and is backed by a low line of treeless hills, which are curiously marked off by cultivated fields, so that they look like great pieces of mosaic set up against the horizon. The appearance of the town is unenlivening. The thatched wooden cabins of the fishermen ; the conical huts of mud and stone, where the worn-out miners pass the few days of old age that their savings permit them to spend in sunlight and repose ; the flimsy framework which the chamois hunter covers with straw and walls in with the skins of beasts, — these line the streets, which are much longer than the town is wide, owing to their narrow and tortuous windings. In the main square, where nothing now remains but the ruins of a great tower, then stood the ancient fortress, built by Horva the master archer, suzerain of Lœvig and brother-in-arms to the pagan king, Halfdan. In 1698 it was occupied by the town syndic, who was the most comfortably installed person in the place, with the exception of the silver stork, which every summer perched at the top of the pointed church spire, like a white pearl fastened at the apex of a mandarin's hat.

The very same day that Ordener arrived at Drontheim, a traveller, also incognito, made his appearance at Lœvig. His gilded litter, although without armorial bearings, and his four tall lackeys armed to the teeth, suddenly became a general theme of discussion and curiosity. The host of the Golden Seagull, the small inn at which this important personage

was stopping, became very mysterious in his manner, and to all questions responded, "I don't know," with an expression which was as much as to say, "I know very well, but you sha'n't be any the wiser." The tall lackeys were as uncommunicative as fish, and gloomier than a mining-shaft. At first the syndic had shut himself up in his tower, waiting in his dignity for the stranger to make the first advances; but before long his fellow-townsmen were surprised to see him present himself twice, without being received, at the Golden Seagull, and in the evening watching for a chance to salute the traveller, as he leaned from his partly open window. From these circumstances, the gossips inferred that the new-comer had informed the syndic concerning his rank; but they were mistaken. The stranger had sent a messenger to the syndic to get his passport indorsed, and the syndic had observed that the big green wax seal upon the document bore the crossed hands of justice, supporting an ermine mantle, surmounted by a count's coronet on a shield, with the collars of the Elephant and of Dannebrog on either side. This sight was enough for the syndic, who was very desirous of securing from the grand chancellor's office an appointment as syndic-in-chief for all Drontheimhus. But he had his labor for his pains, for the unknown nobleman would not see anybody.

The second day following the stranger's arrival at Lœvig was drawing to a close, when the landlord entered his room, and with a humble bow announced that the messenger awaited by his excellency had just arrived.

"Very good," said his excellency; "show him up."

A moment later the messenger entered, closed the door carefully, and then, bowing low to the stranger, who sat with his face partly turned to one side, waited in respectful silence until he should be spoken to.

"I expected you this morning," said the unknown; "what detained you?"

"Your excellency's interests, my lord count; does anything else concern me?"

“What is Elphega doing? Where is Frederic?”

“They are very well.”

“Well, well,” the master interposed, “have you nothing more interesting to tell me? What is the news at Drontheim?”

“Nothing, except that Baron Thorvick arrived there yesterday.”

“Yes, I know; he wanted to consult that old Mecklenburger, Levin, with regard to the projected marriage. Do you know what was the result of his interview with the governor?”

“Up to noon, when I left, he had not seen the general.”

“What? And he arrived last night! You astonish me, Musdæmon. And had he seen the countess?”

“Not at all, my lord.”

“Then you saw him yourself?”

“No, my noble master; more than that, I don’t know him.”

“And how, if no one saw him, are you aware that he is at Drontheim?”

“From his servant, who yesterday arrived at the governor’s palace.”

“But what became of the baron; did he go somewhere else?”

“The servant assured me that, as soon as he arrived, he went to the Spladgest, and then took boat for Munckholm.”

“For Munckholm,” said the count, flushing with anger; “for Schumacker’s prison! Are you sure? I always thought that smug-faced Levin was a traitor. For Munckholm! What could be the attraction there? Did he go to take counsel with Schumacker? Did he” —

“My noble lord,” interposed Musdæmon, “I am not sure that he went there.”

“What? Why, then, did you tell me that he did? Are you trifling with me?”

“Pardon me, your grace, I am simply repeating to your

lordship what the honorable baron's servant said. But my lord Frederic, who was officer of the day at the donjon yesterday, did not see Baron Ordener at all."

"What does that amount to? My son does not know the viceroy's son, and Ordener might have entered the fortress incognito."

"Yes, my lord; but my lord Frederic declares that he saw no one."

"That's different," said the count, calming down. "My son actually said so?"

"He assured me of the fact, three times over, and in this matter my lord Frederic's interests are the same as those of your grace."

This comment on the part of the messenger quite restored the count to his good humor.

"Ah," he said, "I understand. When the baron arrived, he wanted to take a little outing on the bay, and his servant inferred that he was going to Munckholm. In any event, why should he go there? I was very foolish to get so excited. This indifference on the part of my son-in-law toward old Levin proves that his affection for him is not so intense as I feared. You would not believe, my dear Musdœmon," the count went on, with a smile, "that I had already imagined Ordener in love with Ethel Schumacker, and was building up a romantic intrigue in connection with the Munckholm journey; but, thank heaven, Ordener is more sane than I. Speaking of this, my dear Musdœmon, how is the young Danaë getting along in Frederic's hands?"

Musdœmon had been quite as uneasy as his master with regard to Ethel Schumacker; and although he had fought against his fears, he had not been able to vanquish them so easily. He was so gratified, however, at seeing his master in good humor, that he took pains not to disturb his feeling of security; and on the contrary sought to confirm it, for equanimity of mind is one of the most precious attributes that greatness can manifest toward its dependents.

"Noble count, your son has not been successful with Schmacker's daughter, but it seems that some one else has been more fortunate."

"Some one else! Who?" the count interposed quickly.

"Oh, I don't know, — some underling or other, — peasant or vassal" —

"Is that true?" exclaimed the count, his harsh and sombre features becoming radiant.

"My lord Frederic told me so, and also the noble countess."

The count got up, and walked back and forth across the room, rubbing his hands together.

"MUSDÆMON, my dear MUSDÆMON, one stroke more, and we reach the goal. The branch of the tree is withered; it only remains for us to destroy the trunk. Have you any other good news?"

"DISPOLSEN has been assassinated."

"Ah, you see that we progress from triumph to triumph," said the count, his brow now entirely clear. "Did they get his papers, and, above all, the iron box?"

"It is with regret that I inform your grace that the murder was not committed by our hirelings. He was killed and robbed on Urchtal sands, and the deed is attributed to Hans of Iceland."

"Hans of Iceland," the master repeated, his face again beclouded; "what, that notorious brigand, whom we intended to put at the head of the revolt?"

"The same, noble count; and I am afraid, from what I have heard, that we shall have a good deal of trouble in finding him. In any event, I have made sure of some one to assume his name, and act in his place. He is a wild mountaineer, as tall and tough as an oak, as ferocious and daring as a wolf of the snow-plains. Such a formidable giant will readily be taken for Hans of Iceland."

"And is Hans of Iceland a tall man?" the count inquired.

"That seems to be the popular idea of him, your grace."

"I always admire, my dear MUSDÆMON, the ingenuity with

which you arrange your plans. When is the insurrection to take place?"

"Oh, very soon, your grace, perhaps at this very moment. The royal protectorate has long weighed heavily on the miners, and they all seized greedily at the idea of an uprising. The revolt will begin at Guldbranshal, extend from there to Sund-Moër, and then spread to Kongsberg. Two thousand miners can be started on the march in three days. The revolt will ostensibly be inspired by Schumacker, and our emissaries always make use of his name. The reserves in the south, and the garrisons at Drontheim and Skongen, will mutiny; and you will be here just at the fortunate moment to crush the rebellion, thereby winning new and glorious honors in the eyes of the king, and delivering him from Schumacker, who is so disturbing an element to the peace and safety of the kingdom. Upon such massive foundations the edifice of your success will be raised, and its crowning triumph will be the marriage of the noble Lady Ulrica with Baron Thorvick."

A private interview between two scoundrels never lasts for any great length of time, because what little of manhood may remain to them is frightened into silence at their own suggestions of villany. When two degenerate souls exhibit to each other their shame in all its native nakedness, they are revolted, each at the other's foulness. Crime inspires horror in the criminal; and two evil doers, chatting of their passions, their pleasures, and their interests, in cynical confidence, confront one another like two hideous mirrors. Reflected in another personality, they are humiliated by their own baseness, abashed at their own audacity, and horrified at the extent of their own nothingness; and they cannot get away from, or disavow, the likeness, for every odious similarity, every detestable coincidence, every hideous point of comparison, draws out the denunciation of the unsparing inner voice that is always ringing in their ears. However secluded the interview may be, it always has two unendurable witnesses, — God, whom they do not see; and conscience, which they feel.

A confidential interview with Musdœmon was all the more fatiguing for the count, because the other always seemed to take it for granted that his master was equally involved with himself in any criminal proceedings that were in progress or to be undertaken. There are courtiers who believe themselves adroit in shielding their superiors from any appearances of evil; they take upon themselves the responsibility for any wrong-doing, and even leave to their patrons the modest consolation of an ostensible opposition to the crime by which they profit. Musdœmon, by refinement of subtlety, took the opposite course. The part he took was rarely that of a counsellor, and always that of a ready tool. He knew his master's mind as well as his master knew his own, and so he never compromised himself without compromising the count. After Schumacker's, the head that the count would most gladly have seen fall was Musdœmon's. The servitor knew this as well as if his master had told him so in so many words; and his master knew that he knew it.

The count had learned what he wanted to know, and was satisfied. All that remained to him now was to get rid of Musdœmon.

"MUSDœMON," he said, with a gracious smile, "you are the most faithful and the most zealous of my servitors. Everything is going on finely, and I owe it to your solicitude. I appoint you confidential secretary to the grand chancellor's office." Musdœmon bowed low. "That is not all," the count went on; "I am going to ask, for the third time, that you be awarded the order of Dannebrog; but I am still afraid that your family, your unworthy relative" —

MUSDœMON turned red, then pale, and concealed these indications of emotion by another bow.

"Go," said the count, holding out his hand to be kissed — "go, Mr. Confidential Secretary, and get your *placeat* ready. It may perhaps find the king at a favorable moment."

"Whether his majesty grants it or not, I am overwhelmed and flattered at these tokens of your grace's kindly interest."

“Make haste, my dear fellow, for I am in a hurry to get away. We must take all possible means to find out exactly about Hans.”

Musdæmon, with a third bow, pulled open the door.

“Ah,” said the count, “I had forgotten. By virtue of your new office of confidential secretary, you will write to the chancellor’s department, requesting an order of dismissal for the syndic of Lœvig, who has compromised his position in the district by a multiplicity of ill-bred actions towards strangers, of whose rank he knows nothing.”

CHAPTER XIV.

Monk who counts the midnight bead,
Knight who spurs the battle steed,
He who dies mid clarion's swelling,
He who dies mid requiem's knelling, —
Alike thy care, whose grace is shed
On cowlèd scalp and helmèd head.

*Hymn to St. Anselm.*¹

“YES, master, we ought by all means to make a pilgrimage to Lynrass grotto. Would you have thought that the hermit, whom I was cursing for an infernal demon, would turn out to be my guardian angel, and that the lance which to us seemed such a threatening weapon was in reality to serve us as a bridge to carry us over the abyss?”

Thus did Spiagudry, in ridiculously devised figures of speech, weary Ordener's ears with expressions of the joy, admiration, and thankfulness he felt for the mysterious hermit. It will be guessed that the two travellers had left the accursed tower. At the point where we rejoin them they have, in fact, left Vygla far behind them, and are laboriously making their way along a hilly road, where frequent pools of water and great rocks lying in their path bear witness to the ravages of the recent storm. Day had not yet come; but the bushes that surmounted the banks on either side of the road stood out in silhouette against the brightening sky, and although color was still imperceptible, objects were gradually assuming a definite form in the dull, almost turbid light, which in northern regions the dawn lets fall through the cold mists of morning.

Ordener kept silence, for he had been for a few moments

¹ MATURIN: *Bertram*.

overcome by the somnolence that the automatic movements of walking sometimes induce. He had not slept since the morning of the previous day, when he had snatched a few hours of repose in a fishing-boat, anchored in Drontheim harbor, between the time that he left the Spladgest and went to Munckholm. Thus, while his body went on towards Skongen, his mind was back in Drontheim bay, in the sombre prison under the gloomy towers, where dwelt the only being in the world with whom he could associate ideas of hope and happiness. When he was awake, memories of Ethel filled his thoughts; when he slept, her radiant figure illuminated his dreams. In the second life of sleep, where for a moment the soul is free, and the physical personality with all its material limitations seems to vanish, he beheld his beloved one, not more lovely or more pure, but more free, more happy, more wholly his own.

As he traversed Skongen road, however, his forgetfulness of his body and the blunting of his senses could not be complete; since from time to time his feet fell into a mud-hole, or struck against a stone or a branch of a tree, and recalled him rudely from the ideal to the real. Then he would lift up his head, open his weary eyes, and regret the conditions that brought him down from the region of heavenly fancy to the hard requirements of a terrestrial journey, where he had nothing to compensate him for his vanished illusions, except the thought of the lock of hair that Ethel had given him, pressing against his heart, in anticipation of the moment when she herself should belong entirely to him; then this thought would bring back her charming image once more, and he would again fall softly, not into a dream, but into a vague, persistent revery.

"Master," Spiagudry repeated, in a louder voice, which, added to the shock of a stumble over a tree-trunk, served to arouse Ordener once more, "master, there is no occasion for alarm. The archers, when they left the tower, went to the right with the hermit, and we are far enough from them

to converse without fear. Of course it was prudent for a time to keep silence."

"Really," said Ordener, yawning, "you press prudence a little too far. It is at least three hours since we left the tower and the archers."

"That is true, my lord; but one can't be too prudent. Suppose that I had revealed my identity at the moment when the head of that infernal squad had demanded Benignus Spiagudry, in a voice very much like that in which Saturn demanded his newly born son, that he might devour him,—suppose at that terrible moment I had not availed myself of a prudent taciturnity; where should I be now, my noble master?"

"By my faith, old man, I don't believe that at that moment any one would have been able to get hold of your name, if he had tried to drag it out of you with pincers."

"Was I wrong, master? If I had spoken, the hermit,—whom may St. Hospitius and St. Usbald the Solitary, bless,—the hermit would not have had time to ask the chief of the archers if his squad was not made up of soldiers from Munckholm garrison,—a question of no consequence, asked merely to gain time. Did you notice, young master, after the affirmative response on the part of the stupid archer, with what a peculiar smile the hermit invited the others to follow him, in telling them that he knew where the fugitive Benignus Spiagudry was in hiding."

At this point the keeper paused for a moment, as if to make a new start; for he suddenly spoke again, in a tone of lachrymose enthusiasm,—

"A good priest, a worthy and virtuous anchorite, who practises the principles of Christian kindness and gospel charity,—and I was alarmed at his appearance, which in fact was sinister enough, but it concealed such a noble soul! Did you also notice, my noble master, that there was something peculiar in the way in which he said to me, 'Till we meet again,' as he pointed out the road to the archers?"

Under other conditions, his manner of speaking would have alarmed me, but that was not the fault of the pious and excellent hermit. Probably solitude has given his voice an unusual intonation; for, my lord, I know," here Benignus spoke in an undertone, "I know another recluse, that formidable creature that — but no; my respect for the venerable hermit of Lynrass will not allow me to make such an odious comparison. And there was nothing very extraordinary about those gloves, for it was plenty cold enough to wear them, and his saline draught does not surprise me, either. Catholic cenobites often have peculiar ways; and this very one, in fact, has had his virtues celebrated in a verse by the famous Urensus, the monk of Caucasus, —

‘Rivos despiciens, maris undam potat amaram.’

“How is it that I didn’t remember that verse when we were in that accursed ruin at Vygla? If my memory had been a little more alert, I should have saved myself a good deal of foolish uneasiness. It is difficult, however, — is it not, my lord? — to keep one’s head straight in such a den, and sitting at an executioner’s table. An executioner, a creature predestined to universal contempt and execration, who differs from an assassin only by the frequency and impunity of his murders, and who in his heart is as atrocious as the most unmitigated criminals, while he is too cowardly to pattern himself after their adventurous deeds; a creature who offers food and drink with the same hand with which he applies instruments of torture, and cracks the bones of his miserable victims between the close-pressing planks of the wooden horse! To breathe the same air with an executioner, when the vilest mendicant, if soiled by such a contact, throws away in horror the few remaining rags that protect his nakedness and his sores against the cold of winter! And the chancellor, when he has put the seal upon his appointment, throws the seals under the table, in witness of disgust and malediction!

“Why, in France, when an executioner dies, the sergeants of

the prefecture elect to pay a fine of forty livres, rather than succeed him. In Pesth a convict named Chorchill was offered a pardon if he would accept the post of executioner, but he preferred to suffer the penalty of his crimes rather than take up with such a trade. Is it not also notorious, my noble young lord, that Turmeryn, bishop of Maëstricht, had a church reconsecrated after an executioner had entered it, and that the Tsarina Betrovna washed her face every time she came back from an execution? You are also aware that the French kings decreed, in honor of their soldiers, that they should be punished by their comrades, in order that these noble men, even when they were criminals, should not be made infamous by the executioner's touch. And lastly,—and this is decisive,—in the *Descent of St. George into Hell*, by that eminent scholar, Melasius Iturham, does not Charon grant the outlaw, Robin Hood, precedence over Phlipcrass, the hangman? Of a truth, master, if ever I become an influential personage,—and God alone knows as to that,—I shall abolish executions, and revive the ancient method and the old rates. For the murder of a prince they shall pay, as in 1150, fourteen hundred and forty double crowns royal; for the murder of a count, fourteen hundred and forty plain crowns; for that of a baron, fourteen hundred and forty low crowns; the murder of an ordinary nobleman will be taxed at fourteen hundred and forty ascalins; and that of a commoner” —

“Do I not hear the sound of a horse's feet drawing near to us?” Ordener interrupted.

They turned their heads; and as daylight had arrived during Spiagudry's long and learned soliloquy, they could see a man dressed in black a hundred yards behind them, waving one hand at them, and with the other urging on one of the little dirty-white horses which are so often met with, either broken or wild, among the Norway hill districts.

“In pity, master,” said the alarmed keeper, “let us hasten; that man in black looks to me like an archer.”

“What, old man, there are two of us, and shall we run away from a single pursuer?”

“Alas, twenty hawks will fly before one owl. What glory is there in waiting for an officer of justice?”

“And who has told you that he is such a one?” responded Ordener, whose eyes were not dimmed by fear. “Pluck up heart, my worthy guide; I recognize the wayfarer. Let us wait.”

Ordener had his way, and in a moment the horseman drew up beside them. Spiagudry ceased to tremble when he recognized the calm and serious face of the chaplain, Athanasius Munder, who saluted them with a smile as he checked his steed, and said in a voice that was rendered uneven by his rapid breathing, —

“My dear children, it is for your sake that I am taking the return journey; and I am confident that, in view of my charitable intentions, Heaven will not permit my absence to be prejudicial to those to whom my presence is useful.”

“Reverend sir,” Ordener responded, “we shall be happy if we can serve you in any way.”

“On the contrary, noble young man, it is I who can be of service to you. Will you be kind enough to tell me the object of your journey?”

“That, reverend chaplain, I cannot do.”

“I hope, my son, that your refusal is due to lack of power, and not to suspicions; for in the latter case woe be to me, of whom a well-intentioned man is suspicious, even after a single interview!”

Ordener was deeply touched by the priest’s humility and earnestness.

“All that I can tell you, father, is that we are making a visit to the northern mountains.”

“That is what I thought, my son, and that is why I have come to you. There are bands of miners and hunters in the mountains, and they are often greatly to be dreaded by travellers.”

“ Well ? ”

“ Well, I know that there is no use in trying to persuade a noble young man to turn aside when he is in search of danger, but the esteem which I have conceived for you has led me to think of another way in which I may be of service. The wretched counterfeiter to whom I yesterday administered the last consolations of heaven was a miner; and just before his death he handed me this parchment, with his name written upon it, saying that this passport would guard me from all danger if I ever travelled among the mountains. Alas, of what service would it be to a poor priest, who will live and die among convicts, and who, moreover, *inter castra latronum*, should seek for no other defence except in patience and prayer, which are the godly weapons. I did not refuse the pass, because I did not wish to wound the generosity of one who in a few moments would have nothing more to receive or to give here on earth. The good God must have inspired me; for now I bring the parchment to you, trusting that it may accompany you upon your adventurous journey, and that the gift of the dying man may be a benefit to the traveller.”

“ Reverend chaplain,” said Ordener, receiving the venerable minister’s present with profound feeling, “ God grant that your desire be fulfilled ! Accept my thanks ; but,” he added, putting his hand to his sword, “ I already carry my passport here, at my side.”

“ Young man,” said the priest, “ it may be that this fragile parchment will protect you better than your sturdy blade. A glance from a penitent is often more powerful than an archangel’s sword. Farewell ; my prisoners await me. - I beseech you that you will sometimes pray for them and for me.”

“ Holy priest,” Ordener responded, with a smile, “ I have told you that the condemned ones should be pardoned, and they shall be.”

“ Oh, my son, do not speak with so much assurance. Do not tempt the Lord. One man never knows what is taking place in the heart of another, and you are ignorant of the

motives that may decide the viceroy's son. Perhaps, alas, he will not even deign to admit a humble chaplain to his presence. Farewell, my son; may your journey be blessed of Heaven, and may your noble soul now and then have a thought for the poor priest and a prayer for the poor prisoners!"

CHAPTER XV.

Hugo, well met. Does e'en thy age
Bear memory of so terrible a storm ?

MATURIN: *Bertram.*

IN a room opening out of the governor's apartments at Drontheim, three of his excellency's secretaries had just seated themselves at a black table, covered with parchments, paper, seals, and inkstands, while a fourth stool remained unoccupied, indicating that one of their number was yet to arrive. After they had been for some time occupied with their tasks, one of them exclaimed, —

“Do you know, Wapherney, that Foxtipp, the poor librarian, is going to be dismissed by the bishop, thanks to the petition of Doctor Anglyvius, to which you gave your indorsement ?”

“What are you saying, Richard ?” quickly interrupted one of the two other secretaries, to whom Richard had not spoken. “Wapherney could not have indorsed Anglyvius's petition, for it was strongly objected to by the general when I read it to him.”

“Yes, you told me so,” Wapherney responded ; “but I found the word *tribuatur* upon the petition, in his excellency's handwriting.”

“Is that really so ?” exclaimed the other.

“Yes, my dear fellow ; and several other of the conclusions reached by his excellency, of which you have spoken to me, were also changed in the marginal notes. For instance, on the miners' petition, the general wrote, *Negetur.*”

“Well, I don't understand it in the least. The general was a good deal alarmed over the turbulent disposition of the miners.”

“Perhaps he wished to impress them by severity. I am the more disposed to think so, because Chaplain Munder’s petition in behalf of the twelve convicts was also refused.”

The secretary whom Wapherney was addressing got up quickly.

“Oh, no, no; I can’t really believe what you say. The governor is too generous, and has shown too much compassion for the convicts, to” —

“Very well, Arthur,” was Wapherney’s response, “read for yourself.”

Arthur took the petition, and saw the indubitable indications of refusal.

“Well, now,” he said, “I can scarcely believe my own eyes. I shall take the petition to the general again. When did his excellency pass on these petitions?”

“I should say about three days ago,” responded Wapherney.

“It was on the morning preceding the sudden appearance and mysterious disappearance of Baron Ordener,” said Richard, in a low voice.

“See here,” Wapherney exclaimed eagerly, before Arthur had time to respond, “there is also a *tribuatur* on the burlesque petition of that Benignus Spiagudry!”

“Isn’t that the old corpse-keeper, who also disappeared in such a peculiar manner?” said Richard, with a laugh.

“Yes,” responded Arthur; “a mutilated body was found in his charnel-house, and the authorities are after him on the charge of sacrilege; but a little Laplander, who was in his service, and who was left alone in charge of the Spladgest, agrees with the people generally in believing that the sorcerer was carried off by the devil.”

“That’s what it is to leave a good reputation behind one,” said Wapherney laughingly. He had scarcely uttered the last word, when the fourth secretary entered.

“On my honor, Gustavus, you are quite late this morning. Did you by chance commit matrimony yesterday?”

“Oh, no,” interposed Wapherney; “he only took the longest

road around in order to parade his new cloak before the sweet Rosily's windows."

"Wapherney," said the newcomer, "I only wish it were as you say; but the cause of my detention was much less agreeable, and I doubt if my new cloak had much effect upon the persons I have just been visiting."

"Where have you been, then?" asked Arthur.

"To the Spladgest."

"Heaven will bear witness," exclaimed Wapherney, dropping his pen, "that we were speaking of that very place just before you came in; but although one may talk about it for the purpose of passing time, I can't understand why anybody should want to go there."

"And less still," said Richard, "why anybody should care to stop there. But, my dear Gustavus, what did you see?"

"Oh, yes," said Gustavus, "you are curious to hear, if not to see; and it would be no more than fair if I were to refuse to give you an account of the horrors that you are too fastidious to look at in person."

The three secretaries urged Gustavus eagerly; and although he made a show of declining, his desire to describe what he had seen was no less ardent than their wish to hear his story.

"Well, Wapherney, you can take this account to your little sister, who is so fond of hearing about horrors. I was attracted to the Spladgest by seeing a great crowd assembling there. They had just taken in the bodies of three soldiers from Munckholm garrison, and of two archers, found yesterday in the ravines at the foot of Cascadthymore precipice, four leagues away. Some of the people who saw them were sure that the poor wretches made up the squad that was sent out three days ago, in the direction of Skongen, to look for the fugitive Spladgest keeper. If that is true, it is difficult to conceive how so many armed men could have been murdered. The condition of the bodies showed that they had been thrown from the top of the cliffs. It's enough to make one's hair stand on end."

“Good heavens, Gustavus, did you see them?” asked Wapherney earnestly.

“I had them directly under my eyes.”

“And have they any idea as to the perpetrator of the deed?”

“Some think that it might have been a band of miners, and they declare that they heard them yesterday signalling to each other with horns among the mountains.”

“Is that so?” said Arthur.

“Yes; but an old peasant has put an end to that theory, by calling attention to the fact that there are neither mines nor miners anywhere around Cascadthymore.”

“Whom could it have been, then?”

“No one knows. If any portions of the bodies had been missing, it might have been thought that it was done by wild beasts, for the limbs are marked with long, deep scratches. It is the same with the body of an old, white-bearded man, who was brought to the Spladgest day before yesterday morning, just after the dreadful storm which prevented you, my dear Leander Wapherney, from going across the bay to visit your Hero at Larsynn.”

“That’s good, Gustavus,” said Wapherney, with a laugh; “but who’s the old man?”

“From his unusual stature, his long white beard, and the rosary that he still holds tightly grasped in his hand, although everything else was taken from him, it is said that they recognize a certain hermit of the vicinity, called, I believe, the hermit of Lynrass. It is evident that this poor man was also assassinated, but why? They don’t cut throats now on account of religious opinions, and the poor hermit had nothing in the world but a woollen robe and a claim on public charity.”

“And you say,” Richard went on, “that his body, like the bodies of the soldiers, is lacerated as if by the claws of a wild beast?”

“Yes, my dear fellow; and a fisherman says that he found

similar marks on the body of an officer discovered several days ago on Urchtal sands."

"That is very strange," said Arthur.

"It is horrible," said Richard.

"Well," responded Wapherney, "stop talking now and get to work, for I think the general will soon be here. I'm very curious to see those bodies, my dear Gustavus. If it is agreeable to you, we will stop at the Spladgest a moment to-night on our way home."

CHAPTER XVI.

And sideways she, with young unawakened senses,
 Within her cabin on the Alpine field,
 Her simple, homely life commences,
 Her little world therein concealed.
 And I, God's hate flung o'er me,
 And not enough, to thrust
 The stubborn rocks before me
 And strike them into dust !
 Her and her peace I yet must undermine :
 Thou, Hell, hath claimed this sacrifice as thine !
 Help, Devil, through the coming pangs to push me ;
 What must be, let it quickly be !
 Let fall on me her fate, and also crush me, —
 One ruin overwhelm both her and me !

GOETHE : *Faust*.¹

IN 1675, that is to say about twenty-four years, alas, before the period when this story opens, the inhabitants of Thoctree took part in a charming festival, in honor of the marriage of sweet Lucy Pelnyrh and that handsome, tall, noble-hearted young man, Caroll Stadt. They had been in love with one another for a long time; and how could anybody fail to be interested in the destiny of two devoted hearts, on the day when all their ardent wishes and indefinite hopes were finally to be transformed into happiness? They had been born in the same village, and roamed the fields together; and often in their childhood had Caroll fallen asleep, weary with play, with his head on Lucy's breast, and often in their youth, when the day's toil was over, Lucy would go homeward leaning on Caroll's arm. Lucy was the shyest and the prettiest girl in the country, and Caroll the bravest and noblest of the young men; they loved one another, and they could no more

¹ Part I., scene xiv.; translation by Bayard Taylor,

remember the day when they began to love than the day when they began to live.

But their marriage did not come about, as their love did, imperceptibly and spontaneously. There were domestic interests, family dissensions, parental opposition; and for one whole year they had been separated, Carroll longing for his Lucy, and Lucy weeping for her Carroll, until the happy day of their reunion, after which they suffered and wept together.

It was in rescuing her from great danger that Carroll won his Lucy. One day he heard some one screaming in the woods; it was Lucy, who had been surprised by a brigand, a monster, much feared by the mountaineers, who was evidently determined to carry her off. The creature had a human face; but the strange roaring sound, like that of a wild beast, which he was wont to give forth, gained for him the name of Hans.¹ Carroll in his bravery attacked the creature that no one else dared to come to close quarters with, but love gave him the strength of a lion. He rescued his beloved Lucy, and took her to her father, and her father gave her to him.

Joy reigned throughout the village on the day when the two lovers were made one. Lucy, however, seemed to be troubled about something. She had never looked more tenderly at her dear Carroll; but her glance had in it as much of sadness as of tenderness, and mid the general merry-making it gave rise to a good deal of surprise. As the hours passed, and the happiness of her companion was heightened, her eyes expressed more and more of grief, as well as love.

“Oh, my Lucy,” said Carroll to her, after the holy ceremony was over, “the brigand may be a curse to the neighborhood, but he has been a blessing to me!”

Lucy shook her head, but made no other response. Night came, and they were left alone in their new cabin; while the dancing and games were carried on with redoubled zeal in the village square, in celebration of their felicity.

¹ In French, *Han* represents the guttural sound made by a man when he strikes a heavy blow,

The next morning Caroll Stadt had disappeared. A few words written by him were brought to Lucy Pelnryh's father by a hunter from the Kole mountains, who had met him before dawn, wandering along the shores of the bay. Old Will Pelnryh showed the paper to the pastor and the syndie, and nothing remained of the festivities of the day before except Lucy's dejection and gloomy despair.

The mysterious catastrophe astounded the whole village, and all attempts to explain the event were futile. Prayers for Caroll's soul were said in the same church where, a few days before, the young man had himself joined in songs of gratitude for his happiness. It was a wonder that the widow Stadt continued to live at all. After nine months of solitude and mourning, she brought a son into the world, and on that very same day Golyn village was destroyed by the fall of a hanging rock.

The birth of her son did not drive away his mother's gloomy sorrow. Gill Stadt gave no evidence of bearing any resemblance to Caroll. His untamed childhood seemed to give promise of a wildly uncontrollable future. Sometimes a small, savage-appearing man, in whom the mountaineers who saw him at a distance claimed to recognize the notorious Hans of Iceland, visited the widow Stadt's lonely cabin; and those who went by on such occasions heard a woman's groans, and growls like those of a tiger. The man would lead young Gill away; and months would elapse before, with an aspect still more sombre and alarming, he would bring him back to his mother.

The sentiment which the widow Stadt had for her child was a mixture of tenderness and horror. Sometimes she would press him to her breast, as if he were the only bond that held her to life; at other times she would push him away in horror, and call for Caroll, her dear Caroll. No earthly being knew the emotions that filled her heart.

When Gill was past his twenty-third birthday, he saw Guth Stersen, and loved her madly. Guth Stersen was rich and he

was poor; so he set out for Røeraas, to become a miner and earn money. From that time his mother heard no more from him.

One night, as she was sitting by her spinning-wheel by which she got her living, with her dimly burning lamp, under the roof which had grown old with her in loneliness and sorrow, the mute witness of the mysterious events of her wedding-night, she thought anxiously about her son, whose presence, although so much desired, would be sure to revive and perhaps add to her burden of sorrow. The mother loved her son, unworthy as he was; and how could she fail to love him, since she had suffered so much on his account?

She got up and took a rusty, dust-covered crucifix from an old cupboard. For a moment she looked at it in a supplicating way, then she suddenly cast it from her in terror.

"Pray!" she exclaimed, "how can I pray? Your prayers, unhappy woman, must be addressed to hell, for it is in hell that you belong."

She had fallen into a gloomy reverie, when there came a knock at the door. It was a rare event for the widow Stadt to have visitors; for many a long year had passed since the Thoctree villagers, thanks to her extraordinary existence, believed that she was in league with infernal spirits. Thus no one ever came near her cabin. Strange superstitions prevailed at that period in that uncivilized region! Because of her misfortunes, she was rated a sorceress; just as the Spladgest keeper, because of his erudition, was classed as a wizard.

"If it should be my son; if it should be Gill!" she exclaimed, springing toward the door.

Alas, it was not her son, but a little hermit, in a woollen robe, with the hood pulled down, so that nothing but a black beard could be seen of his face.

"Holy man," said the widow, "what is your wish? You do not know to whose house you have come."

"Indeed, I do!" the hermit responded, in a husky and too familiar voice; and snatching off his gloves, his black beard,

and his hood, he revealed a horrible countenance, red whiskers, and hands armed with hideous nails.

"Oh!" the widow exclaimed, hiding her face in her hands.

"Well," said the little man, "are not twenty-four years long enough for you to get used to seeing a spouse whom you will have to contemplate throughout eternity?"

"Eternity!" she murmured, in horror.

"Listen, Lucy Pelnryh; I bring you news of your son."

"Of my son! Where is he? Why does he not come?"

"He cannot."

"But you have news of him. I give you thanks. Is it possible, alas, that you can bring me happiness?"

"Happiness, in fact, I bring you," said the man, in a hollow voice; "for you are a weak woman, and it surprises me that you were able to bring forth such a son. Cheer up, then. You feared that your son would follow in my footsteps. Fear that no longer."

"What!" the mother exclaimed, in ecstasy, "has my son, my beloved Gill, really changed?"

"Oh, greatly changed!" said the hermit, meeting her expressions of joy with an evil laugh.

"Why, then, has he not hastened to my arms? Where did you see him? What was he doing?"

"He was asleep."

The widow, in her extreme joy, did not notice the sinister look, or the horrible mocking air, with which the words were uttered.

"Why did you not awaken him, and say, 'Gill, come and see your mother'?"

"He was sleeping very soundly."

"Oh, when will he come? Tell me, I beg of you, that I shall see him soon."

The sham hermit drew from beneath his robe a sort of cup of peculiar shape.

"Well, widow," he said, "drink to your son's speedy return!"

The widow uttered a cry of horror. It was a human skull. She made a gesture indicative of repugnance, and could not utter a word.

“No, no!” the man suddenly exclaimed, in a terrible voice; “woman, do not turn your eyes away, but look. You asked to see your son again! Look, I tell you, for this is all that is left of him!”

And in the reddish lamplight he pressed the bare, dry skull to the mother’s pale lips. Misfortune had trodden so heavily upon her heart, that one stroke more could not break it. She stared uncomprehendingly at the wild hermit.

“Oh, death,” she said feebly, “death! Let me die!”

“Die if you will, but remember, Lucy Pelnryh, remember Thoctree woods; remember the day when the demon, in possessing himself of your body, gave your soul to hell. I am that demon, Lucy, and you are bound to me for eternity. Now, if you wish to, die!”

It was a tradition among this superstitious people that infernal spirits sometimes appeared among men, to live a life of crime and calamity; and among other famous miscreants, Hans of Iceland was given this horrible renown. It was still believed that a woman who, through seduction or violence, became the prey of one of these demons in human form, became also, through her misfortune, the irrevocable companion of his damnation.

The events which the hermit recalled to the widow seemed to remind her of the popular belief.

“Alas,” she said pitifully, “can I not escape from existence? And where was I at fault?—for, as my beloved Caroll knows, I was innocent. What are a young girl’s arms against the fierce grasp of a demon?”

As she went on, her eyes rolled wildly, and incoherent words fell from her convulsively trembling lips.

“Yes, Caroll, from that day I was impure, yet innocent; and this demon asks me if I remember it—that horrible day. My Caroll, I did not deceive you; you came too late. I was

his, alas, before I was yours! And I shall be punished through all eternity. No, I shall not be able to be with you for whom I weep. What good will dying be to me? I shall go with this monster to the world that is like him, to the world where the wicked dwell; and what have I done? The misfortunes of this life are to be accounted as crimes to me in eternity."

The little hermit looked at her triumphantly and authoritatively.

"Ah," she exclaimed, suddenly turning toward him, "ah, tell me that your presence here is nothing but a frightful dream; for you know, alas, that every ill-omened night since the day of my misfortune, your spirit has visited me in unclean apparitions, frightful visions, and terrifying dreams!"

"Woman, woman, where are your wits? You are as truly awake as Gill is truly dead."

Remembrance of bygone misfortunes had effaced from the mother's mind the latest calamity, but his last words brought it back.

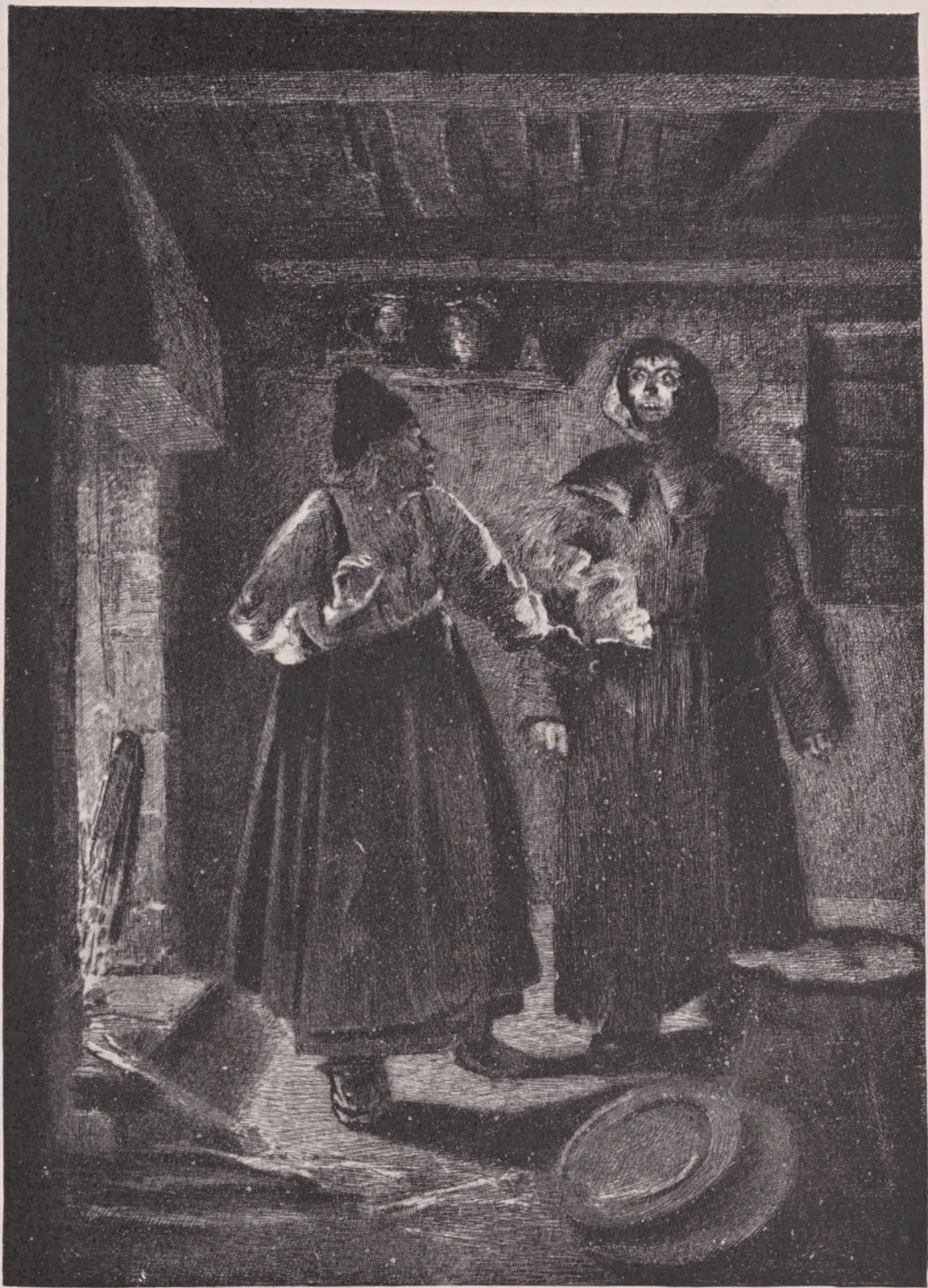
"Oh, my son, my son!" she said, and the sound of her voice would have moved any heart softer than that of the monster who listened to her; "no, he will come back. He is not dead, I cannot believe that he is dead."

"Go, then, and ask the rocks at Røeraas, that crushed him, and Drontheim bay, that swallowed him up."

"God, great God!" the widow gasped, falling upon her knees.

"Be silent, servant of hell!" The unfortunate woman listened as he went on. "Do not doubt that your son is dead. He has been punished for his father's weakness. He let his stony heart be softened by a woman's glance. I, although I possessed you, never loved you. Carroll's misfortune fell upon him. My son and yours was deceived by his betrothed, by her for whom he died."

"Died," she repeated, "died! It is true, then? O Gill, you were born of my misfortune; you were conceived in ter-



“THE LITTLE HERMIT LOOKED AT HER TRIUMPHANTLY AND
AUTHORITATIVELY,”

ror and brought forth in sorrow; your mouth tore at my breast; as a baby you made no response to my caresses and fondlings, but you always avoided and repulsed your mother, whose life was so lonely and disheartened! You never sought to make me forget the afflictions that were past, except by bringing upon me new disasters; you forsook me for the demoniac author of your existence and of my widowhood. Never, in all these long years, Gill, never have I had one joy that came from you; and yet, my son, your death to-day seems to me more insupportable than all my other sorrows, and to-day memory of you seems to be a source of alluring consolation. Alas!"

She could not go on; she hid her face in her coarse black veil, and sobbed pitifully.

"The weakness of woman!" muttered the hermit; then he went on, speaking aloud: "Repress your grief; I make sport of mine. Listen, Lucy Pelnryh. While you continue to weep for your son, I have begun to avenge him. It was for a soldier of Munckholm garrison that his betrothed deceived him. The whole regiment shall perish at my hands. Look at this, Lucy Pelnryh."

He pulled up the sleeves of his robe, and showed the widow his deformed arms, stained with blood.

"Yes," he said, with a characteristic roar, "Gill's spirit ought to find an especial joy in haunting Urchtal sands and the Cascadthymore ravines. Well, woman, don't you see this blood? Let it be a solace to you!"

Then, as if struck with another thought, he quickly changed the subject.

"Widow, has no one brought you an iron box, sent by me? What! I have sent you gold and I bring you blood, and still you weep! It cannot be that you belong to the race of man."

The widow, absorbed in her grief, remained silent.

"Well," he said, with brutal mirth, "you still remain speechless and unmoved! It must be, then, that you do not belong to the race of woman, either, Lucy Pelnryh." He

took her by the arm to arouse her. "Did not a messenger bring you a sealed iron box?"

The widow looked at him for a moment, shook her head, and fell again into mournful revery.

"Ah, the scoundrel," the little man exclaimed; "the miserable traitor! Spiagudry, that gold shall cost you dear!"

And tearing off his monkish robe, he sprang from the cottage with the snarl of a hyena that has scented a corpse.

CHAPTER XVII.

My lord, I comb my hair, — I comb my hair and weep, because you have left me alone and have gone away into the mountains. — *The Count's Lady ; A Romance.*

ETHEL, meanwhile, had passed four long and wearisome days, wandering alone in the gloomy garden of the Schleswig donjon, in the oratory, where she had wept so many tears and offered so many prayers, and in the long gallery, where once she had failed to hear the midnight bell. Her old father accompanied her sometimes ; but she was none the less alone, for the true companion of her life was absent.

Unfortunate young girl, what had that pure young soul ever done to be delivered over to such sorrow ? Snatched from the world, from honors, riches, the joys of youth and the triumphs of beauty, she had been taken from her cradle to dwell in a dungeon. Held in bondage with her imprisoned father, she had grown to maidenhood, watching him wither away ; and as a crowning grief, that she might escape no possibility of slavery, love had come and found her in a prison.

And yet, if she could have had Ordener close by, what would she have cared for freedom ? Would she have even been aware of the existence of a world from which she was separated ? And, moreover, would not her world and her heaven have been comprised within the narrow donjon, beneath the gloomy, closely-guarded towers, at which the passer-by would none the less have cast a look of pity ?

But, alas, her Ordener was for the second time absent ; and instead of passing swift, yet quickly returning, hours with him in sweet and pure caresses, she spent her nights and days

mourning his absence, and praying for his escape from danger, — for a maiden has no refuge, save in prayers and tears.

Sometimes she envied the flitting swallow that came every morning in search of food to her prison-bars. Sometimes she let her thoughts follow the clouds, as they were driven swiftly toward the north by the pursuing wind; then she would suddenly turn aside her head and shield her eyes, as if she dreaded the sight of a gigantic brigand, and the beginning of an unequal combat, on one of the distant mountains, whose purplish summit stood up against the horizon like a motionless bank of mist.

Oh, it is cruel to be in love when one is separated from one's lover! Not many hearts have felt this sorrow in all its intensity, because few hearts have known love in all its profundity. Then one is transported out of one's individuality, creates for one's self a dismal solitude, an illimitable void, and surrounds the absent lover with a multitude of indefinite perils, vague, threatening monsters, and baleful illusions. The various faculties comprised within the mind are all transformed, and merge themselves into an infinite yearning for the departed, and the whole world of reality seems nothing but a dream. And yet one breathes and walks and acts, but as if without volition. The body moves here and there, like a wandering planet that has lost its sun; the soul is far away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Seven valiant chiefs
Slew on the black-orbed shield the victim bull,
And, dipping in the gore their furious hands,
In solemn oath attest the god of war,
Bellona, and the carnage-loving power
Of terror, sworn from their firm base to rend
The walls, and lay their ramparts in the dust.

ÆSCHYLUS: *The Seven Against Thebes*.¹

THE shores of Norway abound in narrow bays, inlets, reefs, lagoons, and little promontories, so multitudinously that they fatigue the traveller's memory and the topographer's patience. Once, according to popular belief, every isthmus had its haunting demon, every inlet its favorite fairy, every promontory its patron saint; for superstition makes a jumble of tradition, and uses it as a nourishment for terror. On Kelvel beach, some miles to the north of Walderhog grotto, there was said to be a spot entirely free from the jurisdiction of any spirit, whether infernal, intermediary, or celestial. It was an open space upon the shore, backed by a cliff, on the summit of which still existed the ancient ruins of the manor-house that once belonged to Ralph, or Radulph, the Giant. This little space of wild land, bordered on the west by the sea, and closely hemmed in by heath-covered cliffs, owed its exemption simply to the name of the old Norwegian patriarch, its former owner; for what fairy or devil or angel would have dared to occupy, or attempt to rule, a domain that had once been occupied and guarded by Ralph the Giant?

It is true that the name of the awe-inspiring Ralph was of itself enough to give a terrifying association to so wild a spot,

¹ Translation by Robert Potter.

but when all is said, a tradition is not so formidable as a spirit; and never did the fisherman, detained by rough weather and mooring his boat in Ralph's creek, see the elf dancing wildly among the souls of the dead at the top of the rock, or the fairy gliding over the heather on her glowworm chariot drawn by gleaming moths, or the saint ascending in the moonbeams after prayer.

If, however, on the night after a great storm, the violence of the wind and waves permitted the wandering mariner to find shelter in that hospitable bay, he might perhaps have been struck with superstitious terror at seeing the three men who, on this particular night, were seated around a great fire that had been lighted in the middle of the glade. Two of them wore the big felt hats and roomy trousers of the king's miners. Their arms were naked to the shoulders, their feet were hidden in fawn-colored half-boots, and a belt of red cloth held their curved swords and long pistols. Both had hunting-horns hung at their necks. One was quite old, the other young; and the old man's thick beard and the young man's long hair gave a savage aspect to faces that were naturally hard and stern in expression.

By his bear-skin cap, his coat of oiled leather, the musket strapped to his back, his short, tight breeches, his bare knees, his bark sandals, and the gleaming axe that he held in his hand, it was easy to recognize, in the companion of the two miners, a mountaineer from the north of Norway.

Certainly, any one who got sight from a distance of these three strange figures — on whom the fire, fanned by the sea-breeze, cast its reddish, capricious light — would have had good reason to be alarmed, even without any thought of spectres or demons; it would have been enough if he simply believed in the existence of robbers, and possessed a little more worldly wealth than falls to the lot of the poet.

The three men kept looking toward the hidden trail that led to Ralph's clearing; and from the words that the wind permitted to be heard, it seemed to be evident that they were waiting for a fourth person.

"Well, Kennybol, do you realize that we shouldn't be waiting quite so peaceably for the Count of Griffenfeld's messenger, if we were over there in the goblin Tulbytilbet's field, or down by St. Cuthbert's bay?"

"Don't speak so loudly, Jonas," the mountaineer responded to the old miner; "blessed be Ralph the Giant, our protector! Heaven preserve me from setting foot in Tulbytilbet's meadow! The other day I picked what seemed to be hawthorne there; but I got mandragora, and it bled and shrieked so that it nearly drove me mad."

"Really, Kennybol," said the young miner, with a laugh; "I am quite ready to believe that the mandragora's cry found a suitable target in your poor brain."

"Poor brain, yourself," said the mountaineer wrathfully. "You hear, Jonas; he laughs at mandragora,—laughs, like a fool playing with a skull."

"Ah, well," retorted Jonas, "let him go to Walderhog grotto, where the heads of the men murdered by Hans, the Iceland devil, come every night to dance about his bed of dry leaves, and gnash their teeth to lull him to sleep."

"Is that true?" asked the mountaineer.

"Well," replied the young man, "did not master Hacket, for whom we are waiting, promise us that Hans of Iceland should put himself at the head of our insurrection?"

"He did promise it," responded Kennybol; "and with the aid of that demon we are sure of getting the better of all the green coats from Drontheim and Copenhagen."

"Very good," exclaimed the old miner; "but I'm not the one to stand on watch with him at night."

At that moment the attention of the speakers was attracted by the sound of breaking twigs; they turned around, and recognized the newcomer, as he approached in the firelight.

"That's he, that's master Hacket! Welcome, master Hacket; you have kept us waiting. We have been here, at the appointed place, more than three-quarters of an hour.

Master Hacket was a short, fat man, dressed in black, with a mirthful but sinister expression in his face.

“Well, my friends,” he said, “I was detained by my ignorance of the way, and the time that I had to spend in looking for it. I left Count Schumacker this morning. Here are three purses of gold, which he charged me to give you.”

The two old men grasped at the money with the avidity characteristic of poor Norwegian peasants. The young miner thrust back the purse that Hacket held out to him.

“Keep your gold, master messenger; I should be lying if I said that I rebel in behalf of your Count Schumacker. I rebel to free the miners from royal guardianship. I rebel that my mother’s bed may have something more than a blanket, ragged as the Norway coast, for its sole covering.”

No signs of annoyance appeared in master Hacket’s countenance; and he responded with a smile,—

“To your poor mother, then, my dear Norbith, I shall send this money, that she may have two new coverings to keep off the winter winds.”

The young man acquiesced with a nod; and the messenger, with clever understanding of the situation, hastened to add,—

“But take care not to repeat what you just now thoughtlessly said,—that it is not in behalf of Schumacker, Count of Griffenfeld, that you take up arms.”

“And yet, and yet,” the two old men muttered, “we know only too well that the miners are oppressed, but we do not know the count, the state prisoner.”

“What,” the messenger interposed quickly, “can your ingratitude be so rank? You were groaning underground, deprived of air and light, despoiled of your property, slaves to the most relentless tyranny! Who came to your aid? Who has inspired you with new courage? Who has furnished you with money and weapons? Was it not my illustrious master, the noble Count of Griffenfeld, who is even more utterly enslaved and more unfortunate than you? And now, loaded with his benefactions, you would refuse to take advantage of them, to give him his liberty at the same time that you gain your own?”

"You are right," the young miner interrupted; "that would be very ungrateful."

"Yes, master Hacket," said the two old men, "we will fight for Count Schumacker."

"Courage, my friends! Rise in his name; carry the name of your benefactor from one end of Norway to the other. Listen. Everything favors your noble enterprise. You are to be delivered from a formidable obstacle, General Levin de Knud, the governor of the province. My noble master, the Count of Griffenfeld, will have him recalled for a time to Bergen, by secret authority. Now tell me, Kennybol, Jonas, and you, my dear Norbith, are all your companions ready?"

"My brethren at Guldbranshal," said Norbith, "are only waiting for my signal. To-morrow, if you desire" —

"To-morrow be it. The young miners, of whom you are the leader, should be the first to raise the standard. And you, my brave Jonas?"

"Six hundred good fellows from the Faroë islands, who have been living for three days on chamois meat and bear's oil, in Bennallag forest, are waiting to hear the summoning horn of their old captain, Jonas of Lœvig."

"Very good. And you, Kennybol?"

"All those who carry axes in the Kole valleys, and climb the cliffs with naked knees, are ready to join their brothers, the miners, whenever they are needed."

"Excellent. Announce to your companions, that they may have no doubt of victory," the messenger added, in a louder tone, "that Hans of Iceland is to be the leader."

"Is it quite certain?" the three asked in unison, in tones expressive of mingled hope and fear.

"I shall be waiting for you, all three, four days from now, at this very hour," the messenger responded, "expecting to see your united forces at Apsylcorh mine, near Lake Smiasen, under Blue Star plain. Hans of Iceland will accompany me."

"We will be there," said the three leaders; "and may God not abandon those who are to have the aid of that demon!"

“Fear nothing, as far as God is concerned,” said Hacket cynically. “Listen. You will find banners for your troops in the old Crag ruins. Don’t forget the war-cry: ‘Long live Schumacker! Schumacker to the rescue!’ We must part now; it will soon be morning. But first, swear to maintain perfect secrecy with regard to what has passed between us.”

Without response in words, the three chiefs opened veins in their left arms with the points of their swords, and seizing the messenger’s hand, each allowed a few drops of blood to fall upon it.

“You have our blood,” they said. Then the younger exclaimed: “May all my blood run out, like that I shed at this moment; may a malignant spirit sport with my hopes, as the whirlwind does with straw; may my arm be lead in the avenging of an insult; may bats dwell in my sepulchre; while I live, may I be haunted by the dead, and when I die, be profaned by the living; may my eyes melt in tears, like a woman’s,—if I ever speak of what has taken place at this hour in Ralph the Giant’s clearing. May the blessed saints bear witness!”

“Amen,” the two old men responded.

Then they departed, and nothing remained in the clearing except the half-extinguished fire, whose dying rays mounted at intervals to the very top of Ralph the Giant’s ruined and deserted towers.

CHAPTER XIX.

Theodore. Let us fly this way, Tristan.

Tristan. 'Tis a sad disgrace.

Theodore. Did they recognize us ?

Tristan. I know not, yet I fear it.

LOPE DE VEGA : *The Gardener's Dog.*

BENIGNUS SPIAGUDRY found it very hard to understand the motives that could impel a young man, who seemed to be well equipped mentally, and to have many years of life yet before him, to assume the attitude of a voluntary aggressor against the redoubtable Hans of Iceland. Several times, in the course of their journey, he had adroitly approached the question ; but, concerning the object of this expedition, the young man preserved an imperturbable silence. The poor keeper was no more successful in solving the other questions to which the behavior of his extraordinary comrade naturally gave rise. Once he had hazarded an inquiry with regard to his young master's family and name.

"Call me Ordener," the other had responded ; and unsatisfactory as the reply was, it was uttered in a tone that admitted of no further discussion. Under these circumstances, acquiescence was the only possible course. Every one has his secrets ; and did not even the good Spiagudry himself take great pains to conceal, in his knapsack under his cloak, a certain mysterious box, concerning which any examination would have been regarded by him as extremely disagreeable and out of place ?

They were four days out from Drontheim ; but they had made comparatively little progress, not so much because of the bad condition of the roads, owing to the storm, as to the multiplicity of cross-cuts and roundabout ways which the

fugitive keeper thought it prudent to take in order to avoid more thickly inhabited regions. Leaving Skongen on their right, they reached the shores of Sparbo towards the evening of the fourth day.

The vast sheet of water presented a sombre and magnificent picture, as it reflected the last rays of the setting sun and the first stars of approaching night, within a frame of high cliffs, black firs, and towering oaks. The appearance of the lake at night sometimes results, when seen from a certain distance, in a peculiar optical illusion. It is as if an immense abyss had been driven through the earth, from one side to the other, and one could look through and see the sky below.

Ordener paused to look at the ancient Druidical forests that covered the mountainous shores of the lake like a crest, and at the clay huts of Sparbo, scattered over the slope like a meagre flock of white goats. He listened to the distant rumble of the forges,¹ mingled with the subdued roar of the wind in the great treetops, the occasional cries of wild birds, and the sober harmony of the waves. To the north, an immense granite cliff, still lighted by the sun, rose majestically above the little hamlet of Oëlmœ, and then bowed its head under a mass of ruined towers, like a giant wearied with its burden.

When the soul is filled with sadness, a melancholy landscape is a source of pleasure, for the mind adds to it something of its own gloom. An unhappy person, coming among great, wild mountains, near a darkening lake, in the midst of a thick forest, just at the sunset hour, will look upon the scene through a veil of dejection; it will seem to him as if the sun were setting never to rise again. Ordener stood there in silent revery, when his companion exclaimed, —

“You do well, young master! One is justified in looking respectfully at the lake which contains more pleuracanthidæ than any other in Norway.”

This speech, and the gesture that accompanied it, would

¹ The waters of Lake Sparbo are famous for their utility in tempering steel.

have brought a smile to the face of any one but a lover separated from his mistress, — perhaps irrevocably. The learned keeper went on, —

“Permit me, at least, to arouse you from your reflections long enough to remind you that the night is near at hand, and that we must hasten if we would reach Oëlmœ before twilight.”

It was a reasonable suggestion. Ordener resumed his journey; and Spiagudry followed him, with a continuous stream of observations regarding the botanical and physiological phenomena that Lake Sparbo provided for the naturalist, — observations to which the young man paid little heed.

“My lord Ordener,” the keeper was saying, “if you have any confidence whatever in your devoted guide, you will abandon your ill-omened enterprise. Yes, my lord, and you will make your abode here by the shores of this marvellous lake, where we can together give our time to an endless series of learned researches — for example, a hunt after the *stella canora palustris*, that marvellous plant, which many botanists believe to be fabulous, but which Bishop Arngrim affirms that he saw and heard on the shores of Sparbo. More than that, we shall have the satisfaction of making our dwelling on a soil that contains more gypsum than any other in Europe, and where the butchers in the employ of the Drontheim Themis are least likely to penetrate. Doesn’t that cheer you up a little, my young master? Come, give up your mad enterprise; for, without desiring to offend you, I am convinced that your undertaking is perilous and profitless, — *periculum sine pecunia*, — that is to say, hair-brained, and conceived of in a moment when you had much better have been thinking of something else.”

Ordener had been paying no attention whatever to the old man’s words, and had only contributed to the conversation the insignificant and meaningless monosyllables that great talkers take for replies. After this manner they arrived at Oëlmœ hamlet, where, at this particular moment, an unusual

agitation was to be noticed in the market-place. The inhabitants of the village — hunters, fishermen, and blacksmiths — had emerged from their cottages, and were grouped around a circular mound upon which several men stood, one of them blowing a horn and waving a little black-and-white flag over his head.

“’Tis some charlatan, no doubt,” said Spiagudry, “*ambulatorium collegia, pharmacopolæ*, some rascal who turns gold into lead and wounds into ulcers. Let us see what diabolical invention he is selling to these poor country people. If these impostors would only confine themselves to royal victims, if they would imitate Borch the Dane, and Borri the Milanese, who made such a stupendous gull of our Frederic III.,¹ but they must have the peasant’s penny, as well as the prince’s millions.”

Spiagudry was mistaken. As they approached the mound they recognized a syndic, by his black robe and round, pointed cap, standing among a group of archers. The man who had blown the horn was the public crier. The fugitive keeper was greatly disturbed, and murmured in an undertone, —

“Really, my lord Ordener, when I came to this village I didn’t expect to fall in with a syndic. St. Hospitius preserve me! What is he going to say?”

His suspense was not prolonged, for the shrill voice of the crier suddenly broke forth over the respectful little assembly of Oëlmœ inhabitants.

“In the name of his majesty, and by order of his excellency, General Levin de Knud, governor, the chief syndic of Drontheimhus makes known to the inhabitants of all the cities, towns, and villages in the province, — first, a reward of

¹ Frederic III. was the dupe of Borch, or Borrichius, the Danish chemist, and more particularly of Borri, a Milanese charlatan, who claimed to be the favorite of the Archangel Michael. This impostor, after astounding Strasburg and Amsterdam with his pretended marvels, enlarged the sphere of his ambition and the audacity of his deceptions; and, after deluding the people, ventured on higher game. He began with Queen Christina at Hamburg, and ended up with King Frederic at Copenhagen.

one thousand royal crowns will be paid for the head of Hans, a native of Klipstadur in Iceland, assassin and incendiary."

A vague murmur went through the assembly.

"Second," the crier continued, "a reward of four royal crowns is offered for the head of Benignus Spiagudry, sorcerer and sacrilegist, ex-keeper of the Drontheim Spladgest.

"This decree will be published throughout the province by the syndics of cities, towns, and villages, who will do all in their power to aid in its execution."

The syndic took the proclamation from the crier's hands, and added, in lugubrious and solemn tones,—

"The lives of these men may be taken by any one who is able to do so."

The reader will be quite ready to believe that the proclamation was listened to with some emotion by the poor, ill-fated Spiagudry. There can be no doubt that the extraordinary signs of alarm which escaped him at that moment would have attracted the attention of the people nearest to him, if they had not been entirely absorbed in discussing the first part of the official proclamation.

"A price on Hans's head!" exclaimed an old fisherman, who had drawn near, dragging his dripping nets. "By St. Usuph, they would do about as well to put a price on the head of Beelzebub."

"If they are going to make a distinction between Hans and Beelzebub," said a huntsman, recognizable by his chamois-skin coat, "they ought to offer only fifteen hundred crowns for the horned head of old Satan."

"Glory be to the Holy Mother of God!" added an old woman, twirling her distaff, her bald head shaking from side to side. "I should like to see Hans's head, just to make sure that his eyes are two burning coals, as people tell me."

"Yes, surely," responded another old woman; "he set fire to Drontheim cathedral, just by looking at it. As for me, I'd like to see the monster all over, with his serpent's tail, his cloven foot, and his big bat's wings."

“Where did you get such stories as that, good mother?” the huntsman interrupted, with a knowing air. “I myself saw Hans of Iceland in the Medsyhath ravines. He is a man like us, only he is as tall as a forty-year-old poplar.”

“Is that really so?” said a voice in the crowd, with a peculiar intonation.

The voice, which made Spiagudry tremble, came from a little man, whose face was hidden under a miner’s big felt hat, and whose body was covered with rush matting and seal-skins.

“On my word,” laughingly interposed a blacksmith, with his big hammer on his shoulder, “whether they offer one thousand or ten thousand royal crowns, whether he is four yards or forty yards tall, I’m not the one to go looking for him.”

“Nor I,” said the fisherman.

“Nor I, nor I,” the others all responded.

“And yet any one who cares to attempt it,” responded the little man, “will find Hans of Iceland to-morrow in Arbar ruins, near Smiasen; day after to-morrow in Walderhog Grotto.”

“My worthy man, are you sure of that?”

This question was asked by Ordener, who watched the scene with an interest that every one but Spiagudry could easily understand, and by another short, stout man, dressed in black, and with a mocking expression, who at the first sound of the crier’s horn had come out from the only tavern that the village contained. The little man with the big hat looked at both of them for a moment, and then replied in a dull voice, —

“Yes.”

“And how can you be so sure of what you say?” Ordener demanded.

“I know where Hans of Iceland is, just as I know where Benignus Spiagudry is; and neither of them is far from here at this moment.”

All his former terror came back upon the poor keeper, who hardly dared to glance at the mysterious little man, and who began to feel that his French wig was a very poor means of concealment. He pulled at Ordener's cloak, and said softly, —

“My lord master, in the name of Heaven, for mercy's sake, for pity's sake, let us get away, — let us get out of this accursed suburb of hell!”

Ordener, also greatly surprised, looked closely at the little man, who turned his back to the west, as if trying to conceal his features.

“As for Benignus Spiagudry,” the fisherman exclaimed, “I have seen him at Drontheim Spladgest. He's tall. 'Tis for him they offer four crowns.”

“Four crowns!” laughed the huntsman. “You don't get me into any chase like that. You can get more for a blue fox-skin.”

This comparison, which at any other time would have been exceedingly distasteful to the learned keeper, gave him some degree of reassurance. He was on the point, however, of urging once more upon Ordener the desirability of continuing the journey, when the latter, having got the information he desired, forestalled him by leaving the group, which was already beginning to break up.

Although, when they came to Oëlmœ, it had been their intention to pass the night there, they left the village together by tacit agreement, not even interrogating one another as to the motive of their sudden departure. Ordener was hoping to catch up with the brigand as quickly as possible, and Spiagudry wanted to get away as promptly as he could from the archers. Ordener was too seriously impressed with the events in which he was taking part to laugh at his companion's misadventures. He was the first to break the silence, and he spoke in sympathetic tones.

“Old man, where is the ruin where Hans of Iceland is to be to-morrow, according to the little man, who seemed to know everything?”

"I don't know. I did not understand him clearly, noble master," said Spiagudry, not untruthfully.

"In that case," the young man went on, "we must content ourselves with looking for him day after to-morrow at Walderhog Grotto."

"Walderhog Grotto, my lord! Why, that is the favorite haunt of Hans of Iceland."

"Let us go that way," said Ordener.

"We turn to the left, behind Oëlmœ cliff. We shall need at least two days to get to Walderhog cavern."

"Have you any idea, my worthy guide," Ordener said graciously, "with regard to the identity of that strange man, who seemed to know you so well?"

This question renewed in Spiagudry the alarm which had begun to subside as they had travelled away from Oëlmœ village.

"No, I have not, my lord," the old man responded in tremulous tones; "but he certainly had a very peculiar voice."

"Don't be alarmed, old man," said Ordener, trying to reassure him. "Serve me faithfully, and I will not fail to protect you. If I come back a victor over Hans, I promise you not only a pardon, but the enjoyment of the thousand crowns reward."

The worthy Benignus was strongly attached to life, but his love for gold was prodigious. Ordener's promises were like a magic talisman, — they not only banished his terrors, but they aroused in him a sort of mirthful loquacity, which expressed itself in prolonged monologues, curious gesticulations, and learned allusions.

"My lord Ordener," he said, "if I were to enter into a debate on this subject with Over-Bilseuth, alias the Chatterer, nothing could prevent me from maintaining that you are a wise and honorable young man. What, indeed, can be more worthy and more glorious, — *quid cithara, tuba, vel campana dignius*, — than to expose one's life nobly to deliver

one's country from a monster, a brigand, a demon, in whom all demons, brigands, and monsters seem to be comprised? Let no one tell me that you are inspired by any sordid motive! The noble lord Ordener surrenders the rewards of his combat to his travelling companion, who will have done nothing except to guide him to within a mile of Walderhog Grotto; for, it is true, is it not, young master, that you will permit me to await the result of your illustrious enterprise at Surb village, which lies about a mile from the shores of Walderhog, in the forest? And when your resplendent victory shall be known, my lord, there will be rejoicing throughout all Norway as great as that of Vermund the Proscribed, when, from the summit of this same Oëlmœ cliff which we are now passing around, he perceived the big fire which his brother Hafdan had lighted on Munckholm towers, in token of its deliverance."

"What!" Ordener quickly interrupted, "can you see Munckholm from the top of this cliff?"

"Yes, my lord; a dozen miles to the south, between the mountains which our fathers called Frigga's Stools. At this time of day one ought to be perfectly well able to see the beacon on the donjon."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ordener, charmed by the idea of seeing once more the place where all his happiness lay. "I suppose, old man, that there is a path leading to the top of the cliff."

"Yes, to be sure, a path that starts in the woods that we are now entering, and rises by an easy grade to the bare face of the rocks, in which the steps can still be found that were cut by Vermund's companions to gain access to the castle. Those are the ruins that you see there in the moonlight."

"Very good, old man; you must show me the path. We'll spend the night among those ruins, the ruins from which we shall be able to see Munckholm donjon."

"Is that your idea, my lord?" said Benignus. "The fatigues of the day"—

“Old man, I’ll help you on your way. My step was never firmer.”

“My lord, the brambles that obstruct the pathway, which has been long unfrequented, the loose stones, the darkness” —

“I will go first.”

“Perhaps some savage beast, some ravaging animal, some hideous monster” —

“It was not to avoid monsters that I undertook this journey.”

The idea of stopping so near to Oëlmœ was very displeasing to Spiagudry; but the thought that he might be able to see Munckholm beacon, and perhaps the light in Ethel’s window, fascinated Ordener, and drew him on.

“My young master,” said Spiagudry, “give up this project. To tell the truth, I have a presentiment that it will bring us misfortune.”

This supplication had no effect in overcoming Ordener’s desire. “Come, come,” he said impatiently, “remember that you have engaged yourself to serve me faithfully. I want you to show me the path. Where is it?”

“We shall get to it very soon,” said the keeper, forced to obey.

In a few minutes the path was visible. They entered it; but Spiagudry noticed, with astonishment and terror, that the tall grass was bent over and trodden down, and that Vermund’s old trail bore every appearance of having been recently travelled.

CHAPTER XX.

Leonardo. The king asks for you.

Henrique. How so?

LOPE DE VEGA: *La Fuerza Lastimosa.*

BEFORE the papers thickly strewn upon his desk, among them a number of newly opened letters, General Levin de Knud sat in profound meditation. A secretary stood close behind him, apparently waiting for orders. At one moment the general beat a tattoo with his spurs on the rich carpet extended beneath his feet; again he toyed abstractedly with the decoration of the Elephant, hung about his neck by the collar of the order. From time to time he opened his mouth as if to speak, then paused, rubbed his forehead, and threw another glance at the opened despatches that covered the table.

“What the devil!” he finally called out. The exclamation was followed by another period of silence. “Who could ever have fancied,” he went on, “that those diabolical miners would have gone so far? There must have been some secret plotting to urge them to such a revolt. Do you realize, Wapherney, that this thing is serious? Are you aware that five or six hundred scoundrels from the Faroë islands, led by an old bandit named Jonas, have deserted the mines; that a young fanatic called Norbith has put himself at the head of the malcontents at Guldbranshal; and that at Sund-Moër, Hubfallo, and Kongsberg, the foolish fellows are only waiting for a signal, and may already have risen? Do you know that the mountaineers are mixed up in the affair, and that one of the boldest foxes in Kole, old Kennybol, is their leader? Do you know, lastly, that it is generally rumored in northern Dron-

theimhus, if the syndics who write to me can be believed, that the famous scoundrel on whose head we set a price — the redoubtable Hans — is chief director of the insurrection? What do you say to all that, my dear Wapherney? Eh?"

"Your excellency," said Wapherney, "knows what measures" —

"There is connected with this deplorable affair a circumstance that I cannot understand; and that is, that our old prisoner, Schumacker, should be, as they say he is, the author of the revolt. That seems to surprise nobody else, but it surprises me more than anything. It is hard for me to believe that a man could be a traitor when the loyal Ordener takes pleasure in being with him. And yet they assure me that the miners have risen in his name; that his name is their watchword and rallying-cry; they even give him the titles that the king took from him. All that seems to be well established; but how is it that the Countess of Ahlefeld knew all these details six days ago, at a time when the first actual symptoms of the insurrection had barely showed themselves in the mines? That is strange. Never mind; we must be ready for any emergency. Give me my seal, Wapherney."

The general wrote three letters, sealed them, and gave them to the secretary.

"Send this message to Baron Voëthaün, colonel of the arquebusiers stationed at Munckholm garrison, that his regiment may at once be marched against the rebels. This is for the commandant at Munckholm, ordering him to keep a more careful watch than ever over the ex-grand chancellor. I must myself see and question Schumacker. And this letter send to Skongen, to Major Wolhm, who is in command there, that he may despatch a part of the garrison to the centre of the insurrection. Go, Wapherney, and have these orders promptly executed."

The secretary went out, leaving the governor absorbed in thought.

"All this is very annoying," he said to himself. "The miners in revolt over yonder, the intriguing chancellor here close by, that crazy Ordener, — no one knows where! It may be that he is on his travels, right in the midst of those bandits, leaving Schumacker conspiring against the state, here under my protection, with his daughter, in whose behalf I have been indulgent enough to send away Frederic Ahlefeld's company, on account of Ordener's accusation. Well, now, it seems to me that this very company might be quite useful in checking the first advance of the rioters; it is well stationed for that. Wahlstrom, where it is in garrison, is near Lake Smiasen and the Arbar ruins. One or the other of those points the insurgents will be sure to seize."

At this stage of his reverie the general was interrupted by the noise of an opening door.

"Well, Gustavus; what do you want?"

"A messenger has arrived, general, and asks to see your excellency."

"Well, what now? More bad news probably. Show the messenger in."

"Your excellency," said the messenger, handing a package to the governor, "this is from his serene highness, the viceroy."

"By St. George," the general exclaimed, with an expression of surprise, as he quickly opened the despatch; "I believe they've all gone mad! If the viceroy hasn't ordered me to report to him at Bergen! He says the matter is urgent, and by order of the king. Well, the urgent matter comes at a very suitable moment. 'The grand chancellor, who is now visiting Drontheimhus, will act as your substitute in your absence.' He's a substitute that I have very little faith in. 'The bishop will assist him.' On my word, Frederic has picked out two good rulers for a revolting province, — two men of the robe, a chancellor and a bishop! Well, well, the commands are indisputable, and they come from the king, so I must go; but before my departure I want to see Schumacker

and have a talk with him. I have a presentiment that they are trying to enmesh me in a labyrinth of intrigue, but I have for my guidance a compass that never deceives me, my conscience."

CHAPTER XXI.

The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out,
Ever from the ground, unto the Lord !

*Cain; A Mystery.*¹

"YES, my lord count; on this very day we ought to come up with him in Arbar ruins. Many considerations go to confirm the truth of the information that I obtained last night, by accident as I told you, in Oëlmœ village."

"Are we far from Arbar ruins?"

"No; they are close by Lake Smiasen. The guide informs me that we shall be there before noon."

These words were exchanged by two persons on horseback, wrapped up in brown cloaks, and following in the early morning one of the numerous narrow and winding paths which traverse the forest in all directions between Lakes Smiasen and Sparbo. A mountain guide, carrying a horn and armed with an axe, went before them on his little gray horse; and behind them came four other horsemen, armed to the teeth, towards whom the two speakers turned their heads from time to time, as if they feared to be overheard.

"If this Iceland brigand is really at Arbar ruins," said one of the two speakers, keeping his horse respectfully a little behind the other, "it will be one great point in our favor, for the difficult thing was to catch up with such an elusive creature."

"Do you think so, Musdœmon? And what if he rejects our propositions?"

"Impossible, your grace! Gold and a free pardon — what brigand could resist that?"

¹ Byron.

"But you know that this brigand is no ordinary scoundrel, so don't judge him by your own measure. If he refuses, how will you fulfil the promise that you gave night before last to the three rebel leaders?"

"Well, noble count, in such an emergency, which I regard, however, as impossible, if we have the good fortune to find our man, has your grace forgotten that a counterfeit Hans of Iceland will be waiting for me, two days from now, at the appointed hour, in the place of meeting assigned for the three leaders at the Blue Star, — a place, by the way, very near to Arbar ruins?"

"You are right, as usual, my dear Musdæmon," said the noble count; and each of the two became absorbed in his own meditations.

Musdæmon, whose interest it was to keep his master in good humor, thought to entertain him by addressing a question to the guide.

"See here, my good man, what is that shabby-looking stone cross, standing up there behind those small oaks?"

The guide, a dull-eyed, stupid-looking fellow, turned and shook his head several times, saying, —

"Oh, my lord master, that is the oldest gallows in Norway. The good King Olaus had it built for a judge who made a compact with a brigand."

Musdæmon saw by his companion's face that the guide's words had made an impression entirely contrary to what he had hoped for.

"It was a very strange story," the guide went on. "Good mother Osie told me about it. They made the brigand hang the judge."

The unfortunate guide did not perceive, in his simplicity, that the subject with which he hoped to entertain the travellers was almost an insult to them. Musdæmon stopped him.

"There, there, that will do," he said; "we know the story."

"Insolent," murmured the count, "he knows the story! Ah, Musdæmon, you shall pay dear for your impertinence."

“Did your grace speak?” said Musdæmon with an obsequious air.

“I was thinking what measures to take to secure the order of Dannebrog for you. The marriage of my daughter Ulrica with Baron Ordener would afford a good opportunity.”

Musdæmon was profuse with his protestations and thanks.

“And now,” his grace continued, “let us discuss matters a little. Do you think that the order for temporary recall has reached the Mecklenburger, as we intended that it should?”

The reader will perhaps remember that the count was in the habit of speaking of General Levin de Knud, who was in fact a native of Mecklenburg, by this designation.

“‘Let us discuss matters a little!’” said Musdæmon to himself indignantly; “the matters that concern me, it seems, are not the matters that concern us. My lord count,” he went on, speaking aloud, “I think that the viceroy’s messenger must be at this moment at Drontheim, and that General Levin is on the point of taking his departure.”

“That order of recall, my dear fellow,” said the count, speaking affectionately, “was one of your master-strokes. It was one of the most ingenious and skilfully executed of all your projects.”

“The honor belongs to your grace, as much as it does to me,” Musdæmon replied, taking pains, as we have previously said, to make the count a partner in all his plottings. The count understood Musdæmon’s secret intention, but pretended to ignore it. He began to smile.

“My dear confidential secretary, you are always modest; but nothing can make me undervalue your eminent services. Elphega’s presence and the Mecklenburger’s absence make my triumph certain at Drontheim. I am now the chief authority in the province; and if Hans of Iceland accepts the command of the rioters, which I intend to offer to him myself, to me will belong, in the eyes of the king, the glory of having put down a serious insurrection, and of having captured a formidable brigand.”

As they conversed thus in low tones, the guide turned back, and said, —

“My honorable masters, here at our left is the hill where Biord the Just, in the sight of all his army, beheaded Vellon of the double tongue, that traitor who sent away the king’s real defenders and called the enemy into the camp, that he might pose as the saviour of Biord’s life.”

These traditions of old Norway did not seem to be very gratifying to Musdœmon, for he brusquely interrupted the guide.

“There, there, my good man ; stop talking and go ahead. What do we care for the stupid legends that ruined walls or dead trees recall to your memory ? My master is wearied with your old wives’ tales.”

CHAPTER XXII.

Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf howls the moon ;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task foredone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide.

SHAKESPEARE : *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

LET us retrace our steps. We left Ordener and Spiagudry, just as the moon was rising, climbing toilsomely the approaches to the great cliff behind Oëlmœ. The cliff is bare from top to bottom; and the Norwegian peasants used to call it the Vulture's Neck, — a name quite expressive of the shape of the enormous mass of granite when seen from a distance.

As the travellers approached the naked portion of the cliff, the forest changed to bushes, moss took the place of grass, and the wild eglantine, the broom, and the holly succeeded to oaks and birches, in that impoverishment of vegetation which on high mountains always indicates proximity to the summit, by showing the gradual thinning of the layer of soil which clothes what might be called the mountain's bones.

"My lord Ordener," said Spiagudry, whose ever active mind was ceaselessly involved in a whirlwind of disconnected ideas, "this ascent is very fatiguing, and to follow you called for all the devotion — But it seems to me that I see a magnificent convolvulus over there on the right; I'd give a good

deal to get hold of it. Why didn't we come by daylight? Don't you think that it was very impertinent to value a learned person like me at four paltry crowns? Of course, the famous Phædrus was a slave; and Æsop, if we are to believe the learned Planudius, was sold in the market like a beast or a chattel, and who would not be proud to have any relation whatever to the celebrated Æsop?"

"And with the celebrated Hans?" added Ordener smilingly.

"By St. Hospitius," the keeper responded, "don't speak his name in that way. I can dispense very well, I assure you, my lord, with the resemblance that you have suggested; but would it not be strange if the price set upon his head finally came into the hands of Benignus Spiagudry, his companion in misfortune? My lord Ordener, you are more generous than Jason; for he did not give the golden fleece to the Argo's pilot, and certainly your enterprise, the object of which I do not wholly understand, is not less perilous than Jason's."

"Well," said Ordener, "since you know Hans of Iceland, give me some information about him. You have already told me that he is not a giant, as he is commonly reputed to be."

"Wait, master!" Spiagudry interrupted. "Don't you hear the sound of footsteps behind us?"

"Yes," the young man responded tranquilly. "Don't be frightened, — 'tis some wild beast, alarmed by our approach, and moving away through the bushes."

"You are right, my young Cæsar. 'Tis a long while since these woods were traversed by human beings. Judging by the ponderous tread, the animal must be large. It must be an elk or a reindeer; this part of Norway is filled with them. There are lynxes around here too. I saw one of them that had been taken to Copenhagen; it was of monstrous size. I must give you a description of the ferocious animal."

"My dear guide," said Ordener, "I would much rather have you give me a description of another not less ferocious monster, that terrible Hans."

“Speak softly, my lord ! To think that the young master should so quietly utter such a name ! You are not aware — Good God, master, just listen !”

Spiagudry, as he spoke these words, drew nearer to Ordener, who heard very distinctly a sound similar to the rumbling that, if the reader remembers, so greatly frightened the timid keeper on the stormy night when they left Drontheim.

“Did you hear it ?” he murmured, panting with fear.

“Of course,” said Ordener ; “and I don’t see why you should be so agitated. ’Tis the roaring of some wild beast, perhaps simply the cry of one of the lynxes you were talking about just now. Did you think that you could go through a place like this, at such an hour, without being reminded in the least of the presence of the beasts that you disturb ? I’ll warrant you, old man, that they are more frightened than you are.”

Seeing the calmness of his young companion, Spiagudry became a little more courageous.

“Well, it may very well be, my lord, that you are right ; but that beast’s cry was horribly like a voice. It was an unfortunate moment, permit me to say to you, my lord, when you decided to climb up to Vermund’s castle. I fear that disaster will come upon us on the Vulture’s Neck.”

“You’re all right, as long as you are with me,” responded Ordener.

“Oh, nothing alarms you ; but, my lord, only the blessed St. Paul can take up vipers without being bitten. Perhaps you didn’t notice, when we struck into this cursed path, that it seemed to have been recently used, and that the trodden grass had not had time to straighten up after the footsteps of some traveller.”

“I acknowledge that I did not notice particularly. My mental tranquillity does not in the least depend on a flattened blade of grass. Now we are about to get beyond the bushes, and we shall hear no more footsteps or whining beasts ; I shall not, therefore, my brave guide, urge you to summon up

your courage, but rather your bodily strength, for the path that has been cut in the rock will no doubt be more difficult than this."

"It is not, my lord, on account of its steepness; but Suckson, the learned traveller, informs us that it is frequently obstructed by pieces of rock and heavy stones, that cannot be lifted aside, and are very hard to climb over. Among them is an enormous triangular block of granite, that I have always eagerly longed to see, not far beyond the Malaër postern, which we are approaching. Schoenning declares that he found the three primitive Runic characters there."

For some time the travellers had been climbing up the naked cliff; and they had reached a small crumbling tower, through which they were obliged to pass, and to which Spiagudry called Ordener's attention.

"That is the Malaër postern, my lord. This rock-hewn road is marked by several other noteworthy structures, which show what the ancient fortifications of the Norwegian manor-houses were like. This postern, which was always guarded by four men-at-arms, was the outermost point of Vermund's fort. By the way, speaking of 'portal,' or 'postern,' the monk Urensus makes this significant observation: 'The word *janua*, which comes from *Janus*, whose temple had such celebrated portals, may perhaps have been the source of the word *janissary*, a guardian of the Sultan's palace.' It would be curious if the name of the gentlest prince known to history had come to be applied to the most ferocious soldiers that exist on earth."

While the keeper was letting loose this jumble of erudition, they continued to make their way, with some degree of difficulty, over the rolling stones and sharp pebbles which were scattered upon the short and slippery grass that is sometimes found in such places. Ordener forgot his fatigue in dreaming of the happiness that he would have at again getting sight of distant Munckholm, when all at once Spiagudry exclaimed, —

"Ah, I see it! This sight alone compensates me for all my trouble. I see it, my lord; I see it!"

"See what?" asked Ordener, thinking at that moment of Ethel.

"Why, my lord, the triangular pyramid that Schoenning spoke of! After Professor Schoenning and Bishop Isleif, I am the third to have the pleasure of examining it. It is too bad, though, to have no other light but that of the moon."

As they drew near to the famous monument, Spiagudry uttered a cry of grief and terror. Ordener was surprised, and inquired eagerly as to the cause of his emotion; but it was some time before the archæologist was able to make any reply.

"You thought," said Ordener, "that the stone blocked the way; you ought to be glad to find that it really leaves a perfectly clear path."

"And that is just exactly what troubles me," said Benignus sorrowfully.

"How is that?"

"Why, my lord," the keeper responded, "don't you see that the pyramid has been moved from its position, that the base, which once stood directly in the path, is now turned uppermost, while the other side, upon which Schoenning discovered the primitive Runic characters, rests upon the earth? What a misfortune!"

"Yes, that is really too bad," said the young man.

"And more than that," Spiagudry went on, with great earnestness, "the fact that the pyramid has been moved shows that some superhuman being has been here. Unless the devil himself did it, there is only one man in Norway with arms strong enough" —

"My poor guide, your fears are once more getting the better of you. How do you know that this stone has not been in this position for more than a century?"

"It is a hundred and fifty years, in fact," said Spiagudry, in a calmer tone, "since the last observer made a study of its

details; but it looks to me as if it had been recently moved, for the place where it stood is still damp. Look, my lord."

Ordener was so impatient to get to the ruins, that he dragged his guide away from the wonderful pyramid, and by various sagacious comments succeeded in dissipating the fears that the extraordinary phenomenon had aroused in the old scholar's mind.

"Listen, old man; you can make your home on the shores of this lake, and give yourself up without further care to your important researches, after you have received the one thousand royal crowns that Hans's head will bring you."

"You are right, my noble lord; but do not speak so flip-pantly of a victory not yet won. I must give you a bit of advice that will make it much easier for you to get the better of that monster."

"A bit of advice? What is it?" said Ordener, drawing close to Spiagudry.

"Well, the brigand," said the keeper in a low tone, glancing uneasily about him, "the brigand carries a skull at his belt, and is accustomed to drink from it. It is the skull of his son, whose corpse was mutilated,—a deed for which I am being hunted."

"Speak a little louder, and don't be so frightened. I can scarcely hear you. Well, this skull?"

"That skull," said Spiagudry, leaning over and whispering in the young man's ear, "you must if possible get hold of. The monster has all sorts of superstitious ideas about it. When you get his son's skull into your power, you can do whatever you like with him."

"Very well, my good man; but how shall I get possession of the skull?"

"By stratagem, my lord. While the monster is asleep, perhaps" —

"That will do," Ordener interrupted. "Your bit of advice is of no use to me. I know nothing about a sleeping foe; I do my fighting with a sword."

"But, my lord, is it not a well-known fact that the Archangel Michael overthrew Satan by strategy?"

At this point Spiagudry suddenly paused, and stretched both arms out before him, exclaiming in a barely audible tone, —

"Oh, great heavens! What do I see up there? Look, master; is not that a little man walking in front of us along the path?"

"On my word," said Ordener, lifting his eyes, "I see nothing of the sort."

"Nothing, my lord? Ah, the path makes a bend there, and he disappeared behind that rock! Let us not go any farther, my lord, I beseech you."

"Well, if the person you think you saw has disappeared so quickly, you may conclude that he had no intention of waiting for us; and if he has taken to flight, that is no reason why we should run away from him."

"Watch over us, St. Hospitius!" said Spiagudry, who in moments of peril never forgot his patron saint.

"You saw the flitting shadow of a frightened owl," said Ordener, "and you thought it was a man."

"And yet I was very sure that I saw a little man, but it is true that moonlight often occasions strange fancies. 'Twas by moonlight that Baldan, the lord of Merneugh, mistook his white bed-curtain for his mother's ghost; and the next day he went and confessed his crime to the judges at Christiania, who were just about to condemn her innocent page. It would be fair to say, in that case, that the moonlight saved the page's life."

No one could surpass Spiagudry in the faculty of forgetting the present in the past. A single recollection, drawn from his inexhaustible memory, was enough to banish all immediate impressions. Thus the story about Baldan drove away his fears, and he went on in a tranquil voice, —

"'Tis possible that the moonlight deceived me in the same way."

In the meantime they were approaching the summit of the Vulture's Neck, and began to see the ruins again which had been hidden from them by the curvature of the rock as they climbed upwards.

The reader need not be surprised at such frequent encounters with ruins among the Norway mountains. Whoever has travelled through the mountainous portions of Europe will not have failed frequently to observe the remains of fortresses and castles, hanging to the crests of the highest peaks like ancient vultures' nests or the eyries of dead eagles. In Norway, especially at the time when we are supposed to be there, these aërial structures existed in astonishing number and variety. Sometimes they took the shape of long dismantled walls, skirting a rock; sometimes they appeared as slender pointed turrets, surmounting a lofty peak like a crown; or on the whitened apex of some tall mountain, great towers were grouped about a majestic donjon, and viewed from a distance looked like an antique tiara.

Side by side with the graceful ogive arches of a Gothic cloister, the massive Egyptian pillars of a Saxon church might be seen; close to the square-towered citadel of a Pagan chief, the battlemented fortress of a Christian war lord; and in juxtaposition with a crumbling fortress citadel, a monastery destroyed by war. All these structures, a medley of extraordinary architecture after ideas almost unknown to-day, audaciously constructed on apparently inaccessible elevations, had fallen into a mass of ruins that served after a fashion to illustrate both the power and the feebleness of man. Perhaps within those walls once took place events more worthy of being related than anything else that has been told on earth; but those events have vanished, the eyes that saw them are closed, for traditions die out with the lapse of time like a fire that is never replenished, and who can penetrate the mysteries of the centuries that are passed?

The manor-house built by Vermund the Proscribed, at which our two travellers are just arriving, was the object,

according to tradition, of an extraordinary array of superstitious beliefs and miraculous adventures. The walls, built of large pebbles laid in cement that had become harder than the stone, showed at once that it had been built in the fifth or sixth century. Of its five towers, one only remained erect at full height; the four others were more or less dismantled, and the fallen fragments were scattered over the top of the cliff. They were united by stretches of ruined walls indicating the original limits of the castle court. It was very difficult to get into this courtyard; for it was obstructed by stone blocks of granite, and trailing vines of all kinds, which ran from wall to wall, covering the masonry with a thick screen, and swung their long, waving tentacles over the front of the precipice. On these loose branches, so 'twas said, the misty ghosts of those who had drowned themselves in Sparbo were wont to swing by moonlight, and at the behest of the demon of the lake, hold the cloud upon which he was to ride away at dawn. Alarming mysteries these, which had been seen more than once by audacious fishermen, when they took advantage of the sleeping dogfish,¹ and brought their boats close under Oëlmœ cliff, which rose above them in the darkness like the broken arch of some colossal bridge.

Our two adventurers climbed with some difficulty through the outer wall, taking advantage of a chance opening, for the old gateway was blocked. The only tower which, as we have said, remained standing, was situated at the edge of the cliff. From its summit, Spiagudry told Ordener one could see Munckholm beacon. They went towards it; although the darkness at this moment was profound, the moon being wholly concealed behind a great black cloud. They were just entering a breach in another wall, on their way to what had been the inner courtyard, when Benignus suddenly paused, and seized Ordener's arm with a hand which trembled so violently that the young man himself was shaken.

¹ Dogfish are greatly dreaded by fishermen, because they frighten other fish.

"What is it?" said Ordener in surprise. Benignus did not reply, but compressed his arm still more vehemently, as if demanding silence. "But"—the young man protested. A tightened grasp, accompanied by a half-stifled sigh, decided him to wait patiently until the fit of alarm had passed. Finally Spiagudry said, in a husky tone,—

"Well, master, what do you think of that?"

"Of what?" said Ordener.

"Yes, my lord," the other went on in the same tone; "you must be sorry now that you ever came up here!"

"Not at all, my worthy guide. I hope to go higher than this. Why should I be sorry?"

"Can it be, my lord, that you did not see?"

"See what?"

"You did not see!" the worthy keeper repeated, his terror momentarily increasing.

"Nothing whatever," responded Ordener impatiently; "I saw nothing, and I heard nothing except the noise of your chattering teeth."

"What! can it be that you didn't see those two flaming eyes staring at us like comets behind the wall there in the shadow?"

"On my honor, no."

"You did not see them move about, rise up, go down, and disappear behind the ruins?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. What difference does it make, anyway?"

"What, my lord Ordener! do you know that there is only one man in Norway whose eyes shine after that fashion in the dark?"

"Well, what then? Who is the man with cat's eyes? Is it your redoubtable Iclander? All the better if he is here; that will save us the trouble of a journey to Walderhog."

This "all the better" was not at all to Spiagudry's taste; and the old man could not refrain from revealing his thoughts in the involuntary exclamation,—

"But, my lord, you promised to leave me at Surb, a mile from the place of combat."

"You are right, old man," replied the good-hearted, noble-natured Ordener, in smiling comprehension; "it would be unjust to involve you in my dangerous undertaking. Don't be alarmed; you seem to see Hans of Iceland everywhere. Wasn't it a wild-cat whose eyes you saw shining so brilliantly among the ruins?"

For the fifth time Spiagudry was reassured, either because Ordener's explanation seemed reasonable enough, or because the tranquillity of his young companion was not without its influence.

"Ah, my lord, if it were not for you, I should have perished from fear a dozen times climbing over these rocks. However, if it had not been for you I should not have ventured."

The moon now reappeared, and permitted them to see the entrance to the tall tower, at the foot of which they were standing. They entered, pushing back a thick curtain of ivy, and bringing down upon their heads a perfect shower of sleeping lizards and old bird's-nests. The keeper picked up two pebbles and struck them together, letting the sparks fall into a heap of dead leaves and dry branches which Ordener gathered. In a moment a clear flame broke forth, scattering the darkness about them, and allowing them to examine the interior of the tower.

Nothing remained of it but the circular wall, which was very thick, and covered with ivy and moss. The ceilings of the four stories had fallen, one after the other, to the bottom, where they formed an enormous heap of fragments. A narrow staircase, with no railing, and broken in several places, rose in a spiral along the inner surface of the wall to the very top. At the first crackling of the blaze, a cloud of owls and ospreys flew heavily away with astonished and lugubrious outcries, and great bats came up at intervals and fanned the fire with their ashy wings.

"Our hosts don't seem to receive us very joyfully," said Ordener; "but don't go to getting frightened again."

"I, my lord!" Spiagudry responded, seating himself by the fire; "I frightened at an owl or a bat! I have lived with corpses, and did not fear vampires. Ah, I fear none but the living! I am not brave, I acknowledge, but neither am I superstitious. Now, if you agree with me, my lord, you will smile at these black-winged, harsh-voiced dames, and think about supper." Ordener could think of nothing but Munckholm.

"I have some provisions here," said Spiagudry, taking his knapsack from under his coat; "but if your appetite is equal to mine, this black bread and rank cheese will soon disappear. I see that we shall be obliged to stay a good ways outside the limits of the law laid down by the French king, Philippe le Bel, — *Nemo audeat comedere præter duo fercula cum potagio*. There ought surely to be sea-gulls' or pheasants' nests at the top of the tower; but how are we to get up there, over a tottering staircase fit only for sylphs?"

"Nevertheless," Ordener responded, "it will have to carry me; for I shall certainly climb to the top of the tower."

"What, master, to get sea-gulls' eggs? Don't, I beg of you, be so venturesome. It's not worth while to kill yourself to get a better supper; more than that, bear in mind that you might make a mistake, and get owls' eggs."

"Yes, your nests are very important. Didn't you tell me that one could see Munckholm donjon from the top of this tower?"

"That is true, young master, — toward the south. I see now that your desire to fix this important geographical point was your motive for making this wearisome journey to Vermund's castle; but please remember, my noble lord Ordener, that although duty may call a zealous student to brave fatigue, it never should lead him into danger. I beg of you not to venture upon that treacherous, ruined staircase, where a crow would not dare to perch."

Benignus was not at all desirous of being left alone in the bottom of the tower. As he got up to take Ordener by the hand, his knapsack fell from its resting-place on his knees, and struck the stones with a ringing sound.

“What’s that in your knapsack that makes such a clatter?” Ordener inquired.

The question touched upon a delicate subject for Spiagudry, and deprived him of his desire to restrain his young companion.

“All right,” he said, without responding to the question; “since you are bound to go to the top in spite of my entreaties, look out for the breaks in the staircase.”

“But,” Ordener persisted, “what was it in your knapsack that made that metallic sound?”

His indiscreet persistency was mightily displeasing to the old keeper, who cursed his questioner from the bottom of his heart.

“There, there, noble master,” he replied; “why are you so curious about a trifling iron shaving-dish, because it struck a stone? Since I cannot dissuade you,” he hastened to add, “don’t stay any longer than you can help, and be careful to hold on to the vines that cover the wall. You will see Munckholm beacon between Frigga’s Stools at the south.”

Spiagudry could have said nothing more likely to banish every other thought from the young man’s mind. Ordener threw off his cloak, and sprang toward the staircase, the keeper following him with his eyes until nothing was visible but a vague shadow gliding along the top of the wall, which was but feebly lighted by the wavering flames below, and the peaceful radiance of the moon. Then the watcher sat down again, and picked up his knapsack.

“My dear Benignus Spiagudry,” he said, “while that young lynx is out of sight and you are alone, suppose you hurry up and break the superfluous iron barrier which prevents you from taking possession, *oculis et manu*, of the treasure doubtless contained in this casket. When it is delivered from

imprisonment, it will be less awkward to carry and easier to hide."

Armed with a big stone, he was about to break open the cover, when a ray of light fell upon the iron seal with which it was fastened, and caught the antiquarian's attention.

"By St. Willebrod the Numismatist, I am not mistaken," he exclaimed, briskly rubbing the rusty cover; "these are the arms of Griffenfeld. I should have done a very stupid thing in breaking that seal. Probably this is the only specimen remaining of the famous crest that was broken in 1676 by the executioner's hand. In the devil's name, we mustn't touch the cover; whatever be the value of the objects it conceals, unless they may be, what is altogether improbable, Palmyra coins or Carthaginian medals, it is certainly more precious. Behold me, then, sole proprietor of the rescinded arms of Griffenfeld! We must hide this treasure carefully. It may be that I shall discover some secret way of opening the casket without committing vandalism. The Griffenfeld arms! Oh! yes; here are the hand of justice and the scales on a field gules! What good fortune!"

At each new heraldic discovery that he made in rubbing off the rust from the old seal, he uttered a cry of admiration or an exclamation of pleasure.

"By the aid of a dissolvent I can open the lock without breaking the seal. These, no doubt, are the ex-chancellor's treasures. If any one tempted by the syndic's four crowns' bait should recognize and arrest me, I should have no difficulty in purchasing my liberty. In that contingency, this blessed box will be my salvation."

Thus speaking, he involuntarily raised his eyes, and his grotesque features let fall in the twinkling of an eye their expression of foolish delight to take on the stamp of idiotic terror. His limbs trembled convulsively, his eyes were fixed, his brows contracted, his mouth opened, and his voice died away in his throat like an extinguished candle.

Opposite to him, on the other side of the fire, stood a little

man with folded arms. By his bloody fur garments, his stone axe, his red beard, and the fierce stare in his eye, the unfortunate keeper recognized at first glance the formidable creature who had last visited him in Drontheim Spladgest.

"'Tis I!" said the little man solemnly. "The casket will be your salvation," he added with an ironical smile. "Spiagudry, is this the road to Thoctree?"

"Thoctree?" stuttered the unfortunate wretch, trying to articulate a few words. "My lord — my lord master — I was going" —

"You were going to Walderhog," the other interposed in a voice of thunder. The terrified Spiagudry brought all his energy to bear and shook his head. "You were bringing an enemy upon me; many thanks; there will be one living man the less. Fear nothing, faithful guide; he will follow you."

The unfortunate keeper tried to make an outcry, but only a feeble, ineffective murmur came from his lips.

"Why does my presence alarm you so? You were seeking for me. Listen; if you make any noise, you are a dead man."

The little man waved his stone axe over the keeper's head, and went on in a voice that poured from his chest like the roar of a mountain torrent, "You have betrayed me!"

"No, your grace; no, your excellency," said Benignus, finally articulating with difficulty these few entreating words.

"Ah, you want to deceive me again!" said the other, breaking into a bellow. "Don't deceive yourself. Listen; I was on the roof of the Spladgest when you made your compact with that crazy fellow; twice you heard my voice. 'Twas I you heard in the storm along the highway; 'twas I you found in Vyglá tower; 'twas I who said, 'Till we meet again'!"

The terror-stricken keeper cast a wild glance around him, as if appealing for succor. The little man went on, —

"I was not willing to allow the soldiers who were pursuing you to escape my clutches. They belonged to a Munck-

holm regiment. As for you, I was sure of you at any time. Spiagudry, you saw me at Oëlmœ village under a miner's hat; you heard my footsteps and my voice, and you recognized the glare of my eyes, as you climbed up to these ruins. I am here!"

Alas, the unfortunate keeper was only too well aware of that fact! He fell like a stone at the feet of his relentless judge, and exclaimed in a pitiful, half-stifled voice, "Have mercy!"

The little man, with folded arms, looked at him with a devouring glance, more flaming than the fire.

"Beg for salvation from the casket whence you expected to obtain it," he said ironically.

"Have mercy, my lord, have mercy!" repeated Spiagudry, almost swooning.

"I advised you to be faithful and say nothing. You have not been faithful; but I will answer for it that in the future you shall be dumb."

Understanding the horrible import of his words, the keeper uttered a prolonged groan.

"Don't be alarmed," said the little man; "I will not separate you from your treasure."

With these words he unfastened his leather belt, drew it through the handle of the casket, and hung it about Spiagudry's neck. The keeper bent with the weight of his burden.

"Well," the other went on, "to what demon do you desire to commit your soul? Summon him quickly, lest another devil, of whom you are not so fond, get the first grip."

The despairing old man, too much beside himself to utter a word, fell at the little man's feet, and made a thousand signs of entreaty and terror.

"No, no," said the other. "Listen, my faithful Spiagudry; don't be so regretful at leaving your young companion in this way, without a guide. I promise you he shall go where you go. Follow me; you will simply be showing him the road. Come!"

HANS OF ICELAND.

At this he grasped the poor wretch in his iron arms, and bore him out of the tower like a tiger carrying a great snake; and a moment later there went up from the ruin a great cry, intermingled with a horrible outburst of laughter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Yes,
The limner's art may trace the absent feature,
And give the eye of distant, weeping faith
To view the form of its idolatry;
But, oh, the scenes mid which they met and parted;
The thoughts, the recollections, sweet and bitter,
The Elysian dreams of lovers, when they loved, —
Who shall restore them?

MATURIN: *Bertram.*

IN the meanwhile, the adventurous Ordener, after narrowly escaping a score of times from falling in his perilous ascent, finally reached the top of the massive circular tower wall. At his unexpected arrival, a host of old black owls, rudely disturbed in their rookeries, flew to one side, watching him with their great staring eyes; and loose stones, slipping from under his feet, fell over into the abyss, bounding from the projecting rocks below with gradually diminishing clangor.

At any other moment Ordener would have allowed his eyes and his thoughts to wander long over the immense expanse, whose magnitude was made even more impressive by the obscurity of the night. His eye, catching sight of the great shadows on the horizon, with their sombre contours but slightly whitened by the nebulous moon, would have sought carefully to distinguish the mists among the cliffs and the mountain tops among the clouds. His imagination would have given life to all the gigantic forms and fantastic appearances with which moonlight endows such scenes. He would have listened to the far-off, vague murmurs of the lake and the forest, mingled with the sharp crackle of the withered

leaves that the wind kept dancing under his feet, and his fancy would have found a hidden language in all the myriad voices that nature utters in the silence of the night-time, while man sleeps. But although the scene made but a slight impression upon his inner being, other thoughts occupied his attention. His feet had barely reached the summit of the wall, when his eye turned toward the southern heavens, and an indescribable joy swept over him as he saw a luminous point, gleaming on the horizon like a reddish star, in the angle made by two mountain peaks. It was Munckholm beacon.

They who cannot understand the happiness that the young man felt are not destined to taste to the full the true delights of existence. His whole heart expanded with rapture; his breathing was quick and deep and strong. Motionless he stood there, with tense gaze, watching his star of consolation and of hope. It seemed to him as if that ray of light, borne through night's bosom from the spot where dwelt all his felicity, brought to him something of Ethel's presence. Ah, let us not deny that souls have sometimes mysterious ways of communication through time and space! Vainly does the world of matter lift its barriers between two souls that love; dwelling in the ideal world, they are together in absence and united in death. What, in fact, is corporeal separation and physical distance to two hearts bound invincibly by one thought and mutual desire? True love may suffer, but it cannot die.

Who has not paused a hundred times, on rainy nights, under some dimly lighted window? Who has not paced back and forth before some magic door, or wandered in ecstasy about a chosen dwelling? Who has not suddenly turned aside at night to follow through the windings of a deserted street a fluttering skirt or bit of white drapery, whose identity had been intuitively recognized? He who is not familiar with such emotions knows not what it is to love.

Confronted by the distant Munckholm beacon, Ordener was

absorbed in thought. His first feeling of joy had been succeeded by one of sad and cynical contentment; a thousand divergent sentiments pressed upon his agitated soul. "Yes," he said to himself, "one must climb long and painfully to get a glimpse of happiness in the expanse of night. She is there, she sleeps, she dreams; she thinks, perhaps, of me! But how is she to know that her Ordener is at this moment standing in sadness and alone, in the darkness at the edge of an abyss?—her Ordener, whose souvenirs of her cluster about a lock of hair worn next his heart, and a wavering light on the horizon!" Then, letting his glance fall upon the reddish reflection of the fire that had been lighted inside the tower, and shone out through the crevices in the wall, he murmured, "Perhaps from the window of her distant prison she looks indifferently at the radiance that has been kindled here."

Suddenly a great cry and an outburst of laughter echoed about him, coming apparently from below, at the brink of the precipice; he turned quickly and saw that the interior of the tower was deserted. In his disquietude with regard to the old man, he hastened to descend; but he had got down only a few steps when he heard a heavy splash, like that which might have been made by a large body falling into the deep waters of the lake.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The count, Don Sancho Diaz, lord of Saldana, shed bitter tears in his prison. Filled with despair, he gave vent in his solitude to accusations against King Alphonso, — “Oh, melancholy moments, when my white hairs remind me of how many years I have already passed in this horrible place !” — *Spanish Romances*.

THE horizontal rays of the setting sun cast the black shadow of the window-grating upon Schumacker’s woollen cloak and Ethel’s crêpe gown. The two were seated by the high ogive casement, the old man in a large Gothic armchair, the young girl on a stool at his feet. The prisoner was in a characteristic attitude of melancholy reflection. His bald and wrinkled forehead rested in his hands, and nothing of his face could be seen but the white beard that fell in disorder upon his breast.

“My father,” said Ethel, seeking some means for distracting his mind, “my lord and father, I had last night such an auspicious dream. Look, my noble father, — lift your eyes and look at the beautiful sky.”

“I can only see the sky through prison bars,” the old man responded ; “and I can only see your future, Ethel, through my misfortunes.”

Then his head, which had been raised for a moment, fell back into his hands, and both were silent.

“My lord and father,” the young girl went on shyly, after a moment, “is it of Lord Ordener that you are thinking ?”

“Ordener ?” said the old man, as if he had not clearly understood what was being said to him. “Ah, I know what you mean. Well ?”

“Do you think he will return soon, father ? It is a long time since he went away. This is the fourth day.”

“I fear,” said the old man, sadly shaking his head, “that

when four days more of his absence are gone by, we shall be as near to his return as we are to-day."

"Good heavens," responded Ethel, turning pale, "do you think that he will never come back?"

Schumacker made no reply. The young girl repeated her question in supplicating and anxious tones.

"Didn't he say that he would come back?" exclaimed the prisoner sharply.

"Yes, of course he did, my lord!" replied Ethel earnestly.

"Very well; then how can you count upon his return? Is he not a man? The vulture perhaps will return to a dead body, but springtime never comes again to the expiring year."

Seeing that her father had fallen again into melancholy abstraction, Ethel was reassured. In her child-like heart there was a voice that imperiously denied the old man's philosophy.

"My father," she said firmly, "Lord Ordener will return. He is not like other men."

"How do you know that, my girl?"

"I know, at least, as much about him as you, my lord and father."

"I know nothing about him," said the old man. "I heard a man expressing godlike sentiments." Then he added, with a bitter laugh, "I have thought it over, and I have come to the conclusion that it was too fine to believe."

"And I, my lord, believe precisely because it is fine."

"Ah, my girl, if you were what you ought to be, Countess of Tonsberg and Princess of Wollin, surrounded, as you would be, by a court of handsome traitors and self-seeking adorers, your credulity would put you in great danger."

"My lord and father, it is not credulity, — it is confidence."

"It is very evident, Ethel, that you have French blood in your veins."

The idea thus suggested took the old man back by a natural transition to his recollections; and he went on, almost complacently, —

“At least, those who cast your father down farther than he had ever been exalted, cannot prevent you from being the daughter of Carlotta, Princess of Tarento, or from having as one of your ancestors Adèle, or Édèle, Countess of Flanders, whose name you bear.”

“My father, you are unjust to the noble Ordener,” said Ethel, whose thoughts were elsewhere.

“Noble, my daughter; what meaning do you give to that word? I have made nobles, and they have turned out villains.”

“I did not mean to say, my lord, that he is noble simply in title.”

“Do you mean that you know him to be descended from a jarl or a hersa?”¹

“As to that, my father, I am ignorant, just as you are. He may be, perhaps,” she went on, lowering her eyes, “the son of a serf or a vassal. Alas, crests of nobility may be painted on a strip of carpet. I was simply trying to express your idea, my venerated lord, and to say that he is noble at heart.”

Of all the men that she had known, Ethel knew Ordener both least and best. He had come into her existence like one of the angels who visited Paradise, surrounded with radiance and mystery; their presence alone revealed their character, and they were adored. Thus Ordener had allowed Ethel to see his heart, which most men conceal. He had kept silence on a subject which most men in his position would have willingly boasted of, his country and his family. The look in his eyes had been enough for Ethel, and she had felt confidence in his speech. She loved him, she had given herself to him, she knew his nature thoroughly; but she did not know his name.

“Noble at heart,” the old man repeated, “noble at heart! Such nobility as that is above anything that kings can give;

¹ The ancient nobility of Norway, before Griffenfeld established the new order, bore the titles of *hersa* (baron) or *jarl* (count). From this latter word is derived the English title, earl.

it comes from God. He deals it out with a careful hand," — here the prisoner lifted his eyes to his broken coat-of-arms and added, — "and he never takes it away."

"Thus it is, my father," said the young girl, "that he who retains the one may easily console himself for the loss of the other."

This sentiment stirred the father to the depths of his being, and revived his courage. He responded in ringing tones, —

"You are right, my daughter, but you do not know that the disgrace which the world may look upon as unjust is sometimes accepted as deserved by one's inner conscience. Our miserable nature is such that, when we are once involved in misfortune, a thousand reproaches that lay dormant in prosperity are aroused within us, to rehearse our misdeeds and our errors."

"Do not talk in that way, my illustrious father," said Ethel, deeply touched; for, in the changed voice in which the old man spoke, she realized that he had allowed the secret of one of his sorrows to escape him. She lifted her eyes to his, and kissing his cold and wrinkled hand, she added softly, —

"You are very severe in your judgment of two noble men, my venerated father, — Lord Ordener and yourself."

"You jump to conclusions, Ethel; you do not know what a serious thing life is."

"But have I done wrong, my lord, in speaking justly of Ordener's generosity?"

"I cannot approve, my daughter," said Schumacker, with a discontented frown, "of your action in admiring an unknown person whom you will probably never see again."

"Oh," said the young girl, upon whom these cold words fell like ice, "do not say that; we shall see him again. Is it not in your behalf that he is gone to meet great dangers?"

"I, like you, was much taken at first with his promises, I confess; but no, he will not go, and so he will not come back to us."

"He will go, my lord, — he will go!"

It was almost a wounded tone in which the young girl uttered these words. She felt as if she had been insulted through the casting of such a doubt upon Ordener. Alas, she was too sure in her own soul of what she affirmed!

"Well," the prisoner went on, with no evidence of emotion, "if he goes and fights that brigand, and braves the danger of such an encounter, the ending will be the same, he will not come back."

Poor Ethel! How often a word let fall in thoughtlessness brings torture to the unhealed wound in an anxious and lacerated heart! She bowed her pale face, to hide from her father's frigid glance the two tears that, in spite of her efforts at self-restraint, dropped from her overflowing lids.

"Oh, my father," she murmured, "perhaps at the very moment when you say those words, the noble-hearted Ordener is dying for you!"

"I neither believe in nor desire such a thing," said the old man, shaking his head doubtfully; "and, even if it 'twere so, where would be my crime? I should simply have shown to that young man the ingratitude that so many others have manifested toward me."

A deep sigh was Ethel's only response; and Schumacker, leaning over his desk, began to finger in an abstracted way the leaves of a copy of Plutarch's *Lives of Celebrated Men*, which was already mutilated in twenty different places, and crowded with annotations. A moment later a door was opened; and Schumacker, without turning around, exclaimed, according to his custom, —

"Let no one come in! Leave me, I wish none to enter here."

"It is his excellency the governor," an usher responded.

An old man, in the full uniform of a general, wearing the collars of the Elephant, Dannebrog, and the Golden Fleece about his neck, advanced toward Schumacker, who made as if to rise, muttering to himself, "The governor! The governor!" The general saluted Ethel respectfully, as she stood

near her father, looking at him with a shy and anxious expression.

Perhaps, before going any farther, it would not be unprofitable to review briefly the motives that actuated General Levin in visiting Munckholm. The reader has not forgotten the disagreeable news which annoyed the old governor in Chapter XX. of this ingenuous chronicle. On that occasion, the necessity of interrogating Schumacker was the first thing to present itself to the general, but he did not decide upon taking that step without extreme reluctance. The idea of tormenting an unfortunate prisoner, who had already undergone so many afflictions, and whom he had known in the height of his power, — the idea of scrutinizing severely the secrets of an unfortunate man, even if he were guilty, — was displeasing to one of his upright and generous mind. Fidelity to the king, however, demanded that the thing should be done; and he could not leave Drontheim without taking with him such new information as the interview might afford concerning the identity of the author of the miners' insurrection.

It was therefore on the evening preceding his departure, after a long and confidential interview with the Countess of Ahlefeld, that the governor made up his mind to see the prisoner. On his way to the castle, the thought of what the interests of the state demanded, and of the advantage which his numerous personal enemies might derive from what they would call his negligence, and perhaps also the astute words of the grand chancellor's wife, had fermented in his brain and confirmed his determination. He therefore ascended to the Lion of Schleswig donjon in a severely judicial mood. He promised himself that his bearing toward Schumacker, the conspirator, should not at all be influenced by the fact that he had once known Chancellor Griffenfeld; he would put aside his memories of the past, and even his natural disposition, and deal with his former colleague in favor and power in a strictly inflexible way. Scarcely, however, had he entered the ex-chancellor's apartments, when he was struck with the old

man's venerable and morose countenance, while he was further touched by the gentle though proud attitude of Ethel; and so the first sight of the two prisoners served at the beginning to mitigate one-half of his severity. He went up to the banished official, and involuntarily put out his hand, and said, without perceiving that the other made no response to his courtesy, —

“I'm glad to see you, Count Griffen” — he had spoken on the impulse of the moment, but he quickly recovered himself. “My lord Schumacker!” Then he paused, quite satisfied by his effort at severity, as if he had nothing more to say.

An interval of silence followed. The general was trying to think of words severe enough to harmonize with the severity of his preliminary address.

“Well,” said Schumacker finally, “are you the governor of Drontheimhus?”

The general, somewhat surprised at being questioned by the person whom he had come to interrogate, nodded his head.

“In that case,” the prisoner went on, “I have a complaint to make to you.”

“A complaint? What is it? What is it?” inquired Levin, with an expression of interest.

“An order from the viceroy directs that I shall be left at liberty and undisturbed in this donjon,” Schumacker responded in an irritated way.

“I am aware of that order.”

“And yet, my lord governor, people are permitted to come into my prison and annoy me.”

“Who are they?” the general exclaimed; “tell me the name of any one that dares” —

“Yourself, my lord governor.”

These words, uttered in a haughty tone, wounded the general, and he responded almost ironically, —

“You forget that my power has no limits when it is a question of service to the king.”

"Except," said Schumacker, "those imposed by the respect due to misfortune; but men know nothing of that."

The ex-grand chancellor said this as if speaking to himself, but he was overheard by the governor.

"Of course, of course! I was wrong, Count Griff—my lord Schumacker, I should say. I ought not to find fault with your anger, since the responsibility is mine."

"My lord governor," Schumacker said pensively, after a moment's pause, "there is in your face and voice something that reminds me of a man I once knew. That was a long time ago. I am the only one that remembers that time. It was the time of my prosperity. There was a certain Levin de Knud, of Mecklemburg. Did you ever know that crazy fellow?"

"I knew him," replied the general imperturbably.

"Ah, you remember him. I thought that remembrance was something reserved for men in adversity."

"Was he not a captain in the royal militia?" the governor went on.

"Yes, only a captain; although the king thought very highly of him. But he was a devotee of pleasure, and never manifested any ambition. He was full of all sorts of extravagant ideas. Can you imagine a favorite with such moderate aspirations?"

"It is possible to imagine such a one."

"I was very much taken with Levin de Knud, because he never gave me any trouble. His friendship with the king was between man and man. You would almost say that it was a matter of sentiment with him, and not a means for advancing his own fortunes."

The general sought to interrupt Schumacker; but the latter went on obstinately, actuated either by a spirit of contradiction, or by the pleasurable emotions awakened in his memory.

"Since you knew Captain Levin, my lord governor, you also were probably aware that he had a son, who died very young; but do you remember what took place at that son's birth?"

"I remember much more clearly what took place at his death," said the general, putting his hand over his eyes, and speaking indistinctly.

"Well," Schumacker responded indifferently, "it was an incident known to but very few persons, and will show you admirably what a queer fellow Levin was. The king wanted to be in attendance at the baptism; will you believe me, when I say that Levin refused? He did more; he selected as the child's godfather an old beggar, loitering about the palace gates. I never could understand the motive for such a crazy notion."

"I will tell you," the general replied. "In selecting a guardian for his son's spiritual needs, Captain Levin undoubtedly thought that a poor man would have more influence with God than a king."

"You are right," said Schumacker, after a moment's reflection.

The governor tried to turn the conversation to the object of his visit, but Schumacker checked him.

"If it be true that Levin of Mecklemburg is not unknown to you, be kind enough to let me speak further of him. Of all the men that I had anything to do with in the days of my greatness, he is the only one of whom the recollection is attended neither with disgust nor horror. If he carried oddity to the verge of madness, he was, nevertheless, by the nobility of his nature, a man who stood almost alone."

"I don't think so. Levin was not very different from other men. There are a great many much better than he."

Schumacker folded his arms, and lifted his eyes to the ceiling.

"Yes; thus it is always. One can never praise a man worthy of praise, without finding that some one is ready to blacken his character. The pleasure of awarding praise when it is due is poisoned by such behavior. It is true, however, that the pleasure of praising justly is very rare."

"If you knew me, you would not accuse me of trying to depreciate the gen — I would say Captain Levin."

"Well, well," said the prisoner, "there were never two men like Levin de Knud for loyalty and generosity, and to assert the contrary is to calumniate him, and to exalt beyond all reason the execrable qualities of the human race."

"I assure you," responded the governor, seeking to assuage Schumacker's indignation, "that I never had any intention of vilifying Levin de Knud."

"Say not so; he was crazy-headed, to be sure, but other men are very far from resembling him. They are false, ungrateful, envious, full of slander. Are you aware that Levin de Knud gave more than half his income to the Copenhagen hospitals?"

"I was not aware that you had any information on that subject."

"There it is!" the old man exclaimed, with an air of triumph. "He thought that he could say what he liked, with perfect security, in the confidence that I knew nothing of poor Levin's good deeds!"

"Ah, no, no!"

"Do you think that I also do not know that when the king wanted to assign him to the command of a certain regiment, Levin requested that it be given to an officer who had wounded him in a duel, because he said the other was his senior in rank?"

"I had an idea that nothing was known concerning his action on that occasion."

"And yet, my lord governor of Drontheimhus, was it any the less praiseworthy on that account? Because Levin chose to conceal his virtues, is that any reason for denying that he possessed them? Oh, these men are always the same, and you dare to put them on the same plane with the noble Levin; why, he tried to save the life of a soldier convicted of attempting to assassinate him, and when he failed, he gave a pension to the widow of his would-be murderer!"

"Well, who would have done any less?"

"Who?" Schumacker burst forth. "Why you, I, any man,

my lord governor ! Because you wear a general's resplendent uniform, and medals of honor on your breast, do you believe that you deserve them ? You are a general, and poor Levin died a captain. Well, he was a crazy fellow, and never worked for promotion."

"If he did not seek promotion himself, the king, nevertheless, gave it to him out of kindness."

"Kindness ? You mean justice, if indeed one may speak of justice as a kingly attribute. Well, what exceptional recompense was given him ?"

"His majesty has rewarded Levin de Knud much beyond his deserts."

"Why, this is wonderful !" the old chancellor exclaimed, striking his hands together. "A loyal captain, after thirty years of service, is perhaps given his majority ; and this great favor you are offended at, my noble general ? A Persian proverb is right when it says that the setting sun is jealous of the rising moon."

Schumacker was so much wrought up that the general could hardly make himself heard.

"You keep interrupting me, so that I have no chance to explain."

"No, no," the other went on ; "I thought, when I first saw you, my lord general, that I detected a certain resemblance between you and young Levin, — but there, it was all fancy."

"But listen to me."

"Listen to you ? That you may inform me that Levin de Knud was unworthy of the wretched favors that were shown him ?"

"I swear to you that such was not" —

"I see what you were after. You are like all the others ; and you were getting around to the point where you could assure me that he, like all the rest of you, was a scoundrel, a hypocrite, and a villain."

"You are quite wrong."

"Who can say ? Perhaps he betrayed a friend, or per-

secuted a benefactor, or poisoned his father, or killed his mother, like the rest of you ? ”

“ You are very much at fault. I am far from desiring ” —

“ Do you know that it was he who persuaded Vice-Chancellor Wind, and Scheel and Vinding and Justice Lasson, three of my judges, not to join in the decree that sentenced me to death ? And yet you think that I will listen unmoved when he is calumniated ! Yes ; that is the way he behaved toward me, in spite of the fact that I always showed him more of harshness than of favor, for I am like you, vile and wicked.”

As this extraordinary interview went on, Levin was touched by unusual emotions. Made the target of the most undisguised insults and the sincerest praise, he knew not how to bear himself in the face of such outspoken compliments or flattering discourtesy. He was wounded, and yet gratified. At one moment he was boiling over with anger, and at another he wanted to overwhelm Schumacker with thanks. Standing there unrecognized, he loved to hear the rough-tongued old chancellor defend the reputation of an absent friend, but he would have been better pleased if the advocate had put a little less gall and vinegar into his panegyric. And yet, at the bottom of his heart, the unrestrained eulogy showered upon Captain Levin gratified him more profoundly than he was wounded by the insults addressed to the governor of Drontheim. He looked benevolently at the dishonored favorite, and let him give full vent to his indignation and his gratitude. At last the old man, after a long declamation against human thanklessness, fell exhausted into his armchair and into the arms of the trembling Ethel, saying, in melancholy accents, —

“ Oh, ye men ! what did I ever do to you that you should make yourselves known to me ? ”

The general had not yet come to the important subject that had led to his descent upon Munckholm. The reluctance that he had felt about tormenting the prisoner with questions was renewed within him, and his pity and sympathy were re-enforced by two other significant considerations, — the ex-

treme agitation which Schumacker had manifested left little hope that he would respond in a satisfactory way; and moreover, in looking at the affair without prejudice, Levin felt confident that such a man could not be a conspirator. Nevertheless, how could he leave Drontheim without interrogating Schumacker? The painful responsibilities of his official position once more overcame his hesitation; and softening his voice to the gentlest possible accent, he thus began, —

“I beg of you, calm yourself, Count Schumacker.”

The honorable governor had the idea that, by adopting such a mode of address, he could gratify the respect that was due to the sentence of degradation with the regard that should be shown for greatness in misfortune, and so he joined the title of nobility with the other's family name. He went on, —

“It is a painful duty imposed upon me, in accordance with which I have come” —

“In the first place,” the prisoner interrupted, “permit me, my lord governor, to speak again of a subject which interests me much more than anything your excellency can have to say to me. You assured me a moment ago that the crazy Levin had been rewarded for his services. I would like very much to know in what way.”

“His majesty, my lord Griffenfeld, raised Levin to the rank of general, and for more than twenty years the madman has pursued a peaceful career, enjoying the honors of his military dignity and the benevolence of his king.”

“Yes, the mad Levin, who was contented to stay a captain, will die a general; and the wise Schumacker, who expected to die a grand-chancellor, passes his old age as a prisoner of state.”

As he said this, the old man covered his face in his hands, sighing deeply. Ethel, who had no idea of the import of the interview, but who saw that it was increasing her father's melancholy, sought at this point to turn his attention.

“Father, do you see, up there at the north, a light which has never appeared there before?”

Darkness had fallen; and a feeble, distant light could be seen upon the horizon, apparently upon the summit of some far-off mountain. But Schumacker was not constantly turning his thoughts and eyes to the northward, as Ethel was, so he made no response. The general was impressed by what the young girl said.

"Perhaps," he thought to himself, "it is a fire lighted by the rebels;" and this suggestion recalling him forcibly to the object of his visit, he once more addressed the prisoner: "My lord Griffenfeld, I am sorry to disturb you, but it is necessary that you should submit" —

"I understand you, my lord governor. It is not enough that I pass my days in this donjon, submit to vilifications and exile, and find myself deprived of everything but bitter remembrances of greatness and power. It is also necessary that you should come and violate my solitude by spying upon my grief, and making sport at my misfortunes. Since the noble Levin de Knud, of whom I have been reminded by certain things in your personal appearance, is a general, like you, it would have been very fortunate for me if he had been given the position that you occupy; for he, I can assure you, my lord governor, would never have sought out a poor wretch in a prison to torment him."

During the course of this extraordinary interview, the general had more than once been on the point of making himself known, to bring it to an end; but Schumacker's indirect reproach made such a course impossible. It accorded so well with his own inner feelings that it inspired him with a sense of shame. He endeavored, nevertheless, to make some response to Schumacker's formidable accusation. It was a strange thing, but the difference in the characters of these two men had brought about in each a distinct change of attitude. The judge, after a certain fashion, was obliged to justify himself before the accused.

"But," said the general, "if his duty had demanded, there can be no doubt that Levin de Knud" —

“Yet I doubt it, noble governor!” Schumacker exclaimed. “Do you not yourself doubt that he would have refused, with all the generous indignation of his soul, to take the part of a spy, and increase the sufferings of an unhappy prisoner? I tell you, I know him better than you, and in no case would he have assumed the duties of an executioner. Now, my lord general, I will listen to you. Do what you call your duty. What does your excellency wish of me?”

And the old chancellor fixed a proud glance upon the governor, whose resolution now failed him. His first reluctance was revived and became invincible.

“He is right,” he said to himself; “I cannot persecute an unfortunate man simply on suspicion. They may assign this task to somebody else!”

The result of these reflections speedily manifested itself; he went up to the astonished Schumacker, and took him by the hand, then made a hurried departure, saying, —

“Count Schumacker, always keep the same high opinion of Levin de Knud.”

CHAPTER XXV.

Lion. Oh —

[The Lion roars. Thisbe runs off.]

*Demetrius.*¹ Well roared, lion!

SHAKESPEARE: *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

THE traveller who in these days makes his way among the snowclad mountains that surround Lake Smiasen like a white cincture will find no vestige of what the seventeenth century Norwegians called Arbar ruins. No one has ever been able to learn the origin or the manner of building of those ruins, if one may really give them that name. Coming out of the forest which skirts the southern part of the lake, after ascending a slope marked here and there with the remains of walls and towers, one comes to an arched opening, piercing the side of a mountain. This opening, which to-day is wholly obstructed by landslides, gave entrance to a sort of gallery, cut in the rock and traversing the mountain from side to side. The gallery was feebly lighted by conical openings made in the roof at intervals, and ended in a sort of oblong, oval-shaped hall, partly excavated in the rock, and finished off with a stretch of Cyclopean masonry. Around the hall, in deep niches, roughly carved figures in granite were stationed. Some of these mysterious images had fallen from their pedestals, and lay at random on the stone pavements, with other shapeless incumbrances, shrouded in grass and moss, and haunted by lizards, spiders, and all the hideous insects which are born of the earth and ruins.

Daylight penetrated into the place only through a door opposite the mouth of the gallery. The doorway, seen from a

¹ Theseus, in Hugo's version.

certain direction, was ogive in form, but roughly made, in accordance with no particular period, and had evidently been merely a chance thought on the part of the builders. The doorway came down to the floor; but it might have been called a window, for it gave upon a deep precipice, and one could not understand the object of the three or four steps that were cut on the face of the cliff outside, and just below this extraordinary opening.

This hall was the interior of a sort of gigantic turret, which, when seen on the side of the precipice and from a distance, looked like one of the peaks of the mountain. The turret was isolated; and, as has been said already, no one knew to what edifice it had belonged. Above it, on a plateau inaccessible to the most zealous hunter, was an elevation which might be taken, on account of the impossibility of examining it closely, either for a rounded mass of rock, or for the remains of a colossal archway. The turret and the crumbling archway were known to the peasants as the Arbar ruins. The origin of the name was just as inscrutable as the origin of the monument itself.

On a stone in the middle of the elliptical chamber sat a little man, clad in the skins of wild animals, whom we have had occasion to meet with several times in the course of this story. He had turned his back toward the light, or rather toward the vague illumination which made its way into the turret when the sun was in the zenith. The light was the strongest that could ever by natural means gain access to the turret interior, but it was not enough to allow one to distinguish the identity of the object over which the little man was stooping. A faint, groaning sound could be heard; and it seemed to come from the object in question, and to be accompanied from time to time by weak convulsive movements. Sometimes the little man sat up and carried to his lips a sort of cup, shaped something like a human skull, and full of a steaming liquor, the color of which was not discernible; and of this he drank long and deeply. All at once he rose to his feet.

“It seems to me that some one is walking along the gallery. Is it the chancellor of the two kingdoms already?”

The words were followed by an outburst of horrible laughter, winding up with a savage bellow, to which a howling from the gallery speedily made answer.

“Oho,” the occupant of the Arbar ruins commented, “it is not a man, but some other enemy, — it’s a wolf.”

In fact, a big wolf came suddenly into the arched entrance to the gallery, paused for a moment, and then crawled side-wise toward the man, with his belly to the ground, and glaring at him with eyes that shone like coals in the darkness. The man stood still, with folded arms, and looked at the animal.

“Ah, it’s the old gray wolf, — the oldest wolf in the Smiasen forests. How do you do, Mr. Wolf? Your eyes glare, you are hungry, and the odor of corpses attracts you. Perhaps other hungry wolves will soon be attracted by you. Welcome, old wolf of Smiasen; I have always had a great desire to meet you. You are so old, that they say you cannot die. They will not say so to-morrow.”

The animal replied with a terrific howl, made a leap in the air, and landed upon the little man. The latter did not recoil a single step. With the rapidity of lightning, he put his right arm around the wolf’s body, as the animal stood in front of him with its two forepaws on his shoulders; with the left hand he guarded his face from the gaping jaws of his enemy, by seizing the beast at the throat with such violence that it was obliged to lift its head, and could scarcely articulate a cry of suffering.

“Smiasen wolf,” said the man triumphantly, “you are tearing my cloak, but your skin can replace it.”

With this declaration of victory he intermingled several words in a strange jargon, and a convulsive movement on the part of the agonized wolf threw him against some of the stones that were scattered over the floor. They fell together, and the man’s roaring rivalled the animal’s howls. Forced

by his fall to let go of the wolf's neck, the little man already felt the sharp teeth sinking into his shoulder, when, as they rolled over one another, the two combatants struck against a large, white, hairy object, which was lying in the darkest part of the hall. It was a bear, which awoke from its heavy sleep and began growling.

No sooner had the dull eyes of this creature opened sufficiently to perceive the conditions of the struggle, than he sprang furiously, not upon the man, but upon the wolf, which at that moment was uppermost, seized it violently with his jaws by the middle of the body, and so released the little man. The latter did not seem to be at all thankful for the well-meant interference, but got up all covered with blood, and springing toward the bear gave it a vigorous kick in the belly, as the owner of a dog might do when he wished to correct a fault.

"Friend, who called on you? What have you to do with this affair?" The words were intermingled with furious exclamations and gnashing of teeth. "Clear out!" he added, with a roar.

The bear, having got a kick from the man and a bite from the wolf, uttered a sort of plaintive moaning, and then, hanging his heavy head, released the famished wolf, which sprang upon the man with all its former ferocity. While the struggle continued, the repulsed bear went back to his sleeping-place, sat solemnly down, and looked indifferently at the two furious combatants, making no sound, and rubbing one of his forepaws after the other across the end of his white nose.

When the dean of the Smiasen wolves returned to the charge, the little man seized the beast's bloody muzzle, and by an unprecedented exhibition of strength and adroitness succeeded in getting a firm grip of the jaws with his hand. The wolf struggled violently with rage and pain; bloody froth fell from his compressed lips; and his eyes, swelling with anger, seemed to be starting from their sockets. Of the two adversaries, it was the wild beast whose bones were scraped

by sharp teeth, and whose flesh was torn by pitiless claws, and it was the man whose howlings were the most savage and the most terrifying.

Finally the latter, summoning up all the strength that had not been exhausted by the old wolf's prolonged resistance, grasped the animal's jaws with his two hands with such vigor that blood gushed from both mouth and nostrils; the flaming eyes grew dull and partly closed; the beast trembled, and fell powerless at the feet of the victor, the feeble and continuous moving of the tail, and the convulsive and intermittent trembling that ran over the body, alone showing that the brute was not yet wholly dead. All at once a final convulsion shook the expiring animal, and all signs of life disappeared.

"Well, you're done for now, my fine beast!" said the little man, with a scornful kick; "did you expect to be any older after meeting with me? You are done now with stealthy prowling across the snow in pursuit of prey, for you are yourself good feed for wolves and vultures. Many frightened travellers have you devoured around Smiasen, during your long life of murder and carnage; now you're dead yourself, and you will eat no more men,—a fact greatly to be regretted."

He picked up a sharp stone, stooped over the warm, palpitating body, broke the joints of the legs, separated the head from the carcass, slit the skin along the whole length of the carcass, stripped it off as if it had been a coat, and in the twinkling of an eye the formidable Smiasen wolf was nothing but a naked and bleeding mass of flesh. The little man then threw his spoils over his own gashed and bleeding shoulders, turning outward the fleshy side of the damp skin, which was marked with long stains of blood.

"I have to wear the skins of wild beasts," he grumbled to himself; "human skin is too thin to keep out the cold."

As he thus spoke, his native hideousness made still more hideous by his trophy, the bear, becoming weary of inaction,

had cautiously approached the other object, which was spoken of at the beginning of this chapter, and which now lay partly concealed in the shadow. Soon a gnawing sound came from that darkened portion of the apartment, and with it faint and painful cries of agony. The little man turned around.

"Friend!" he exclaimed in a threatening tone; "oh, you miserable Friend! Here, come here!"

And picking up a large stone, he threw it at the monster's head. The bear was stunned by the blow, and slowly withdrew from his banquet. Licking his red lips, he came and threw himself down panting at the little man's feet, lifting his enormous muzzle and curving his neck, as if to ask pardon for his indiscretion. Then the two monsters — for the term may very well apply to the inhabitants of Arbar ruins — exchanged a significant series of growls. The man's utterances expressed authority and anger; the bear's, supplication and submission.

"Look here," said the little man, pointing with his crooked finger to the stripped body of the wolf; "here's your prey. Let mine alone."

The bear smelt of the wolf's body, shook his head in a discontented way, and turned his eyes toward the man, who was so evidently his master.

"I understand," said the latter; "that is already too dead for you, while the other still breathes. Your tastes are very fastidious, Friend; as much so as a man's. You want your food to be alive when you take hold of it; you like to feel the flesh die under your teeth, and you get no pleasure from it unless it is suffering. I sympathize with you, Friend; for I am not a man. I am above the level of that miserable spawn; I am a wild beast, like you. I wish that you could speak, my good Friend, that you might tell me if the joy that runs through your entrails when you devour a man is equal to mine. But no; I don't want to hear you speak for fear your voice would seem too human. Yes; growl on at my feet, with the growl that makes the frightened shepherd tremble in

the mountains ; to me it is like the utterance of a friend, because it proclaims the approach of an enemy. Lift up your head, Friend, lift it up to me, and lick my hands with the tongue that has so often dipped in human blood. Like me you have white teeth, and it is not your fault that they are not as red as a newly made wound ; but blood washes out blood. More than once from some dark cavern I have seen the Kole or Oëlmœ girls washing their naked feet in the mountain torrents, and singing softly ; but I would rather have your shaggy jaws and husky growlings than their melodious voices and satiny bodies, because you carry terror to the heart of man."

Speaking thus he sat down, and gave his hand to the caressing monster, who rolled upon his back, at his feet, and fawned upon him in a thousand ways, like a spaniel displaying his manifold graces upon the sofa of his mistress. The strangest thing about the whole affair was the intelligent attention which he seemed to give to his master's words. The peculiar monosyllables with which the little man interlarded his speech seemed to be quite intelligible to the animal ; and he manifested his comprehension by suddenly lifting his head, or giving vent to guttural sounds deep down in his throat.

"Men say I fly from them," the little man went on ; "but 'tis they who fly from me ; they do from fear what I do from hatred ; and yet you know, Friend, that I am always glad to meet with a man when I am hungry or thirsty."

All at once, far back in the gallery, he saw a reddish light appear and gradually grow larger as it feebly illuminated the old wet walls.

"Here comes one now. You speak of hell, and Satan shows his horns. Here, Friend," he added, turning toward the bear ; "here, get up !" The animal sprang to his feet. "'Tis well ; since you obey quickly, you shall be well fed."

So speaking, he bent down over the object that lay upon the ground. There was a noise of splintering bones under a hatchet, but it was no longer accompanied by sighs and groans.

"It seems," the little man murmured, "that only two of us can live in Arbar hall. There, good Friend; go on with your interrupted banquet."

He cast the fragment that he had detached from the object stretched at his feet toward the outer doorway of which we have spoken. The bear sprang upon his prey so ferociously that the sharpest eye would not have been able to determine whether or not the dainty tidbit bore any resemblance to a human arm, clothed in a piece of green cloth of the exact shade of the uniform worn by the Munckholm arquebusiers.

"Some one approaches," said the little man, his eye fixed on the light which continued to increase. "My good Friend, leave me alone a minute. Here, get outside!"

The obedient monster sprang towards the door, went backward down the outside steps, and disappeared with a growl of satisfaction, bearing his disgusting prey in his jaws. At the same moment a tall man emerged from the gallery whose tortuous depths still reflected a feeble light. He wore a long brown cloak, and carried a dark lantern, the rays of which he directed into the little man's face. The little man, still seated upon a stone and with folded arms, called out, —

"You are unwelcome, whether you come here by intention or by chance!"

But the stranger, without making any reply, looked at the speaker attentively.

"Stare all you like," the little man went on, lifting his head; "perhaps in an hour or so you will have no voice to boast of having seen me."

The newcomer directed the light so that it showed the whole of the little man's person, and seemed to be more surprised than alarmed.

"Well, what are you marvelling at?" the little man resumed, with a laugh like the noise of a breaking skull; "I have arms and legs, like you; but my limbs will not, like yours, be food for crows and lynxes."

The stranger at length replied in a low tone, as if he feared nothing except being overheard from outside.

"Listen, I come to you, not as an enemy, but as a friend."

"Why, then," the other interrupted, "did you not cast off your human shape?"

"My intention is to render you a service, if you are the one I am looking for."

"That is to say, you want to get some favor from me. Man, you waste your breath. I render service only to those who are tired of life."

"By your words," the stranger responded, "I recognize you clearly as the man I want, but your stature, — Hans of Iceland is a giant; you cannot be he."

"This is the first time any one has denied it to my face."

"What! Can it be you?" and the stranger drew nearer to the little man. "But I have been told that Hans of Iceland is a colossus!"

"Add my renown to my stature, and I am taller than Hecla."

"Really! Tell me, I beg of you, are you indeed Hans, a native of Klipstadur in Iceland?"

"I don't reply to that question in words," said the little man, getting up; and the glance he shot at the imprudent stranger caused the latter to fall back two or three steps.

"Restrict yourself, I beg of you, to replying with a look," the newcomer said, in a tone of entreaty, casting a glance at the doorway to the gallery, in evident regret that he had ever passed through. "It is in your interests alone that I have come here."

On entering the hall the newcomer had not been able to see clearly the one he was approaching, and so he had been able to manifest a certain degree of composure; but when the occupant of Arbar arose, with his tiger face, his knotted arms, his bloody shoulders, half clad in the steaming wolf-skin, his great hands and nails, and his flaming eyes, the adventurous stranger shuddered, like an ignorant traveller who thinks he is about to take up an eel and is bitten by a viper.

"In my interest?" the monster inquired. "Do you come,

then, to tell me of some spring to be poisoned, some village to burn, or some Munckholm arquebusier to throttle?"

"Perhaps. Listen. The Norwegian miners are in revolt. You know what disasters follow a revolt."

"Yes; murder, rape, sacrilege, burning, pillage."

"All that I offer you."

"There is no need for you to offer them me," the little man said with a laugh; "I go and take them." The ferocious chuckle that accompanied these words once more made the stranger tremble. He went on, nevertheless, —

"I propose in the name of the miners that you take command of the insurrection."

The little man was silent for a moment, then his features suddenly took on an expression of diabolical malice.

"Is it really in their name that you make me this proposition?"

The question seemed to disconcert the newcomer; but in the confidence that he was unknown to his formidable questioner, he quickly recovered his self-assurance.

"Why did the miners revolt?" the other inquired.

"To escape from the requirements of royal guardianship."

"Only for that?" the other asked in a jocular tone.

"They wish also to deliver the prisoner from Munckholm."

"Is that the sole object of the rising?" repeated the little man with an accent which the stranger found disconcerting.

"I do not know of any other," the latter stammered.

"Ah, you do not know of any other!"

These words were uttered in the same ironical tone. The stranger, in order to overcome the embarrassment which they caused him, hastened to draw a large purse from under his cloak, and to throw it at the monster's feet.

"Here is your pay for taking command."

"I do not want it," said the little man, kicking the purse one side. "Do you suppose that if I wanted your gold or your blood I would wait for your permission in order to satisfy myself?"

"That is a present that the miners asked me to give you," said the stranger, with a gesture of surprise and almost alarm.

"I do not want it, I tell you. Gold is of no use to me. Men are very ready to sell their souls, but they do not sell their lives. When one wants a human life, one is obliged to go and take it."

"Shall I announce, then, to the leaders of the miners that the redoubtable Hans of Iceland will take command without pay?"

"I will not take command."

These words, brusquely spoken, seemed to produce a very disagreeable effect on the ostensible envoy from the rebellious miners.

"What!" he said.

"No!" the other responded.

"You refuse to take part in an expedition that offers you so many advantages?"

"I can pillage farms, devastate hamlets, and massacre peasants or soldiers, without assistance."

"But remember that if you accept the miners' offer you will have absolute impunity."

"Is it also in the name of the miners that you promise me impunity?" the other demanded with a laugh.

"I will not hide from you," the stranger responded with an air of mystery, "that it is in the name of an influential person who is interested in the insurrection."

"And is this influential person himself sure of not being hanged?"

"If you were aware of his identity, you would not shake your head in that way."

"Ah? Well, who is he?"

"That is just what I cannot tell you."

The little man drew near, and let his hand fall on the stranger's shoulder, still laughing sardonically.

"Do you wish me to tell you?"

The man in the cloak made a gesture expressive of alarm and wounded vanity. He was no more pleased by the rude interruption than by the monster's savage familiarity.

"This is very droll," the little man continued. "You are not aware that I know everything. The influential person of whom you speak is the grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway, and the grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway is yourself."

He indeed it was. Arrived at Arbar ruins towards which he was travelling with Musdæmon when we left him, he had made up his mind to allow none but himself to assume the responsibility of winning over the brigand; for he had not the slightest idea that he had been recognized and was expected. Never afterward could the Count of Ahlefeld, in spite of all his subtlety and resource, discover by what means Hans of Iceland had kept himself so well informed. Did Musdæmon betray him? It was Musdæmon, of a truth, who had suggested to the noble count the idea of visiting the brigand in person; but what profit could he derive from such perfidy? Had the brigand captured from any of his victims documentary evidence concerning the grand chancellor's projects? But Frederic Ahlefeld was the only living being, aside from Musdæmon, who knew anything about his father's plan; and empty-headed as he might be, he would not have been silly enough to divulge so important a secret; more than that, he was in garrison at Munckholm, or at least the grand chancellor believed him to be there.

Those who follow this scene to the end will be no more successful than the Count of Ahlefeld was in solving the problem, but they will see how much probability was to be attached to this last-named hypothesis.

Presence of mind was one of the most prominent traits of the Count of Ahlefeld. When the little man called him by name so brusquely, he could not repress an exclamation of surprise; but in the twinkling of an eye the expression of his pale and haughty features changed from alarm and astonishment to serenity and assurance.

"Well, yes," he said; "I desire to be frank with you. I am indeed the chancellor, but I hope that you will also be frank with me."

"Did I make you ask my name, and tell your own?" the little man interrupted, with an outburst of laughter.

"Tell me, with the same sincerity, how you knew who I was."

"Did no one ever tell you that Hans of Iceland can see through mountains?"

"Look upon me as a friend," the count persisted.

"Your hand, Count of Ahlefeld!" said the little man sternly. Then he looked the chancellor in the face, and exclaimed, "If our two souls were to take flight from our bodies at this moment, I believe that Satan would hesitate before he could decide which of the two belonged to the monster."

The haughty nobleman bit his lips; but between fear of the brigand on the one hand, and the need of winning his assistance on the other, he gave no other evidence of his annoyance.

"Do not trifle with your interests; accept the command of the insurrection, and have confidence in my gratitude."

"Chancellor of Norway, you count upon the success of your enterprise, like an old woman who dreams of the gown she is going to make from stolen hemp, while the cat tangles up the thread on her distaff."

"Once more reflect before you reject my proposals."

"Once more I, the brigand, say to you, grand chancellor of the two kingdoms — no!"

"I expected a different reply, after the distinguished service that you have already rendered me."

"What service?" the brigand inquired.

"Was it not you who assassinated Captain Dispolsen?" the chancellor responded.

"That may be so, Count of Ahlefeld; I was not acquainted with him. What sort of a man was he, of whom you speak?"

"What! did not the iron casket which he carried fall into your hands?"

"Wait," said the other, his recollections seeming to be stirred by the question; "I do remember a man with an iron casket. 'Twas on Urchtal sands."

"At least," said the chancellor, "turn that casket over to me, and my gratitude will know no bounds. Tell me what became of the casket, for you must have disposed of it in some way."

The chancellor insisted so strongly on a reply to this question, that Hans's curiosity was aroused.

"The iron box is then of very great importance to his grace, the chancellor of Norway?"

"Yes."

"What will be my reward, if I tell you where you can find it?"

"Anything that you may desire, my dear Hans of Iceland."

"Well, I shall not tell you."

"Ah, you are trifling with me! Think of the service you would be rendering me."

"That is precisely what I do think of."

"I will put you in possession of an immense fortune, and get the king to grant you a pardon."

"Get him rather to give you one for yourself," said the brigand. "Listen to me, grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway; tigers never feed on hyenas. I am going to let you depart alive out of my presence because you are a wicked man, and every instant of your life the thoughts that are in your mind bring misfortune upon men and a new crime upon yourself. But never come to me again, or I shall teach you that my hatred spares no one, not even scoundrels. As for your captain, don't flatter yourself that I slew him in your behalf. 'Twas his uniform that settled his fate, as well as that of this other wretch, whose throat I cut, out of no desire to serve you, I assure you."

So speaking, he seized the count's arm, and dragged his visitor toward the body lying in the shadow. As he finished speaking, the light from the dark lantern fell upon the spot.

It was a mangled carcass, clothed in the uniform of an officer of the Munckholm arquebusiers. The chancellor drew near, with a feeling of horror. All at once his attention was arrested by the pallid, blood-stained face. He could not fail to recognize the purple, half-opened lips, the bristling hair, the livid cheeks, and the sightless eyes. He uttered a cry of horror, —

“Great heavens, it is Frederic, my son!”

Let no one doubt that hearts apparently the most shrunken and hardened have within them always, in some remote corner, treasures of affection of which they are themselves ignorant, and which seem to be concealed by their passions and their vices, until the day when the mysterious witness from the past is transformed into an avenger. One might almost say that such resources of affection existed merely to teach the wrongdoer the possibilities of suffering. Silently the hidden witness awaits its hour. The perverse man carries it in the depths of his soul, and does not realize its presence, because no ordinary affliction is strong enough to penetrate the thick shell of egotism and wickedness with which it is enveloped. But let some exceptional and irresistible sorrow present itself without warning, and it plunges to the very foundations of being, like a sword. Then the hidden is revealed; and the emotion to which it gives rise is all the more violent because the source of it has been so long ignored, and all the more agonizing because the sting of misfortune has been driven so deep in order to reach it. Nature awakes and bursts forth unchained, visiting upon the wretched victim unaccustomed desolation and unwonted torture, bringing to a momentary focus the sufferings that have been evaded for so many years. The most contradictory emotions seize upon him simultaneously. His heart, weighed down with a deadening stupor, becomes a prey to convulsive pangs. He gets a taste of hell in this life, and is overwhelmed with an affliction deeper than despair.

The Count of Ahlefeld loved his son unwittingly. We say

his son, because he was ignorant of his wife's faithlessness, and Frederic was in his eyes the direct heir to his name and titles. Believing that he was yet at Munckholm, the count was all the more astounded to find him in Arbar turret and to find him dead. And yet there he was, bleeding and disfigured; it was he, without any doubt. One can imagine what took place in his soul, when the certainty of love confronted the certainty of loss. The emotions which two discoveries like that would naturally arouse tore his heart with pitiless violence. Struck down by surprise, and crushed by despair, he fell back, wringing his hands, and repeating in lamentable tones, —

“My son! My son!”

The brigand burst out laughing, and it is a horrible thing to hear laughter echoing amid the groans of a father confronting the corpse of his son.

“By my ancestor Ingolphus, you may call, Count of Ahlefeld, but you will never awaken him again.” Then his savage features darkened, and he said sombrely, “Weep for your son; I avenge mine.”

He was interrupted by the noise of hurried footsteps in the gallery; and, as he turned his head in astonishment, four tall men with naked swords sprang into the hall. They were followed by a fifth, who was short and stout, and carried a torch in one hand and a sword in the other; he wore a brown cloak, similar to the grand chancellor's.

“My lord,” he exclaimed, “we heard you, and hastened to your assistance.”

The reader has doubtless already recognized Musdæmon and the four men-at-arms, who composed the count's body-guard.

As the light of the torch illuminated the hall, the five newcomers paused in horror; and it was, in fact, a terrifying spectacle. On one side lay the bloody remains of the wolf, on the other the disfigured corpse of the young officer, and between the two the wild-eyed, lamenting father, and the horrid bri-

gand, who looked upon his assailants, his hideous face expressive of surprise, but not of fear.

Seeing unexpected re-enforcements, the count was seized with a desire for vengeance, and his despair was turned into rage.

"Death to the brigand!" he shouted, drawing his sword. "He has murdered my son! Kill him! Kill him!"

"He has murdered Lord Frederic?" Musdoemon inquired, the light from the torch which he carried showing not the slightest alteration in his countenance.

"Kill him! Kill him!" the count repeated furiously.

The six rushed upon the brigand; and he, surprised at this sudden attack, withdrew towards the door opening upon the precipice, with a ferocious bellow, expressive of anger rather than of dread.

Six swords were pointed at him, and his look was more furious and his attitude was more threatening than that of any of his adversaries. He seized a stone axe; and obliged by the number of his assailants to act upon the defensive, he swung it about him with such rapidity that the revolving weapon protected him like a shield. Sparks flew in showers from the sword-points as the axe struck them, but not a blade could touch his body. The fight with the wolf, however, had exhausted his strength; and he was gradually forced back, until he came to the door opening upon the abyss.

"Courage, friends," the count exclaimed; "pitch the monster over!"

"The stars will fall before that happens," replied the brigand.

The aggressors redoubled the ardor and boldness of their attack, when they saw the little man obliged to take refuge on the steps overhanging the abyss.

"Good," the grand chancellor shouted; "give him no quarter! He will have to go over; now, once more! Wretch, you have committed your last crime! Courage, comrades!"

Whirling the axe continuously with his right hand, the

brigand, making no response, took the horn hanging at his belt in his left hand, and putting it to his lips, blew several long, hoarse blasts, which were speedily answered by a roar from the depths below.

A little later, just as the count and his attendants were glorying over the fact that they had obliged the little man to take one more step downwards, the enormous head of a white bear appeared from under the lowermost step. Struck with astonishment and terror, the assailants drew back. The bear climbed heavily up the steps and confronted them, with his sharp teeth and bloody jaws.

“Well done, my good Friend!” exclaimed the brigand; and taking advantage of the astonishment of his assailants, he sprang upon the bear’s back; and the animal began to descend backwards, with his threatening head still confronting his master’s enemies.

Recovering from their momentary stupefaction, they saw that the bear was carrying the brigand out of their reach, making his way down the precipice in the same manner doubtless as that in which he had come up, by hanging to old logs and projecting rocks. They tried to roll stones down on him; but they had just got a big block of granite loose from the soil where it had so long been half buried, when the brigand and his extraordinary steed disappeared in a grotto.

CHAPTER XXVI.

No, no; let us laugh no more. You must know that what seemed to me to be so droll has also its serious side, — very serious, like all else in the universe! Believe me, the word “chance” is blasphemy; nothing under the sun happens by chance; and can you not see, in what has happened here, a distinct manifestation on the part of Providence? — LESSING:
Emilia Gallotti.

YES; a deeply hidden purpose often lies in what men call chance. In the course of human events one can see the influence of a mysterious hand, guiding their course and pointing to the goal. We storm at the caprices of fortune and the extraordinary decrees of fate; and all at once chaos is illuminated with a crashing thunderbolt or a glorious radiance, and human wisdom humbles itself before the inspiring teachings of destiny.

If, for example, when Frederic Ahlefeld was cutting such a brilliant figure before the women in the sumptuous salons of Copenhagen, with his fashionable attire, his airs of superiority, and his presumptuous chatter, — if some one who could foresee the future had disturbed his frivolity with serious revelations; had told him that on some day to come the gorgeous uniform he was so proud of would be the badge of his destruction; that a monster with human face would drink his blood, as he, the thoughtless voluptuary, drank French and Bohemian wines; that his hair, upon which he lavished so many essences and perfumes, would sweep up the dust in a wild beast’s lair; that the arm, which he offered so gracefully to the beauties of Charlottenburg, would be thrown to a bear, like a half-gnawed roebuck bone, — what response would Frederick have made to such lugubrious predictions? With an outburst of laughter, as he turned on his heels; and the most terrifying

thing about it would be that human wisdom would have been altogether on the side of the madman.

Let us examine a little more closely into this question of destiny. Is it not a marvellous mystery, that the crime committed by the Count and Countess of Ahlefeld should recoil in punishment on their own heads? They had devised an infamous plot against the prisoner's daughter. The unfortunate girl meets by chance with a protector, who finds it desirable to send the son away, that he might not carry out the abominable design with which they had intrusted him. The son, who is their only hope, is despatched to a distance from the scene of his crime, and scarcely reaches his destination, when chance once more intervenes, in the guise of an avenger, and leads him to his death. Thus, in seeking to bring the young and innocent girl, whom they detested, to dishonor, they had thrust their own guilty and idolized son into the tomb. It was by their own misdoings that these wretched creatures were afflicted with so much sorrow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ah, there is our beautiful countess! Pardon me, madam, if I am unable to-day to profit by the honor of your visit. I am very busy. Another time, dear countess, another time. But to-day I will detain you here no longer. — *The Prince to Orsina.*

ON the day after his visit to Munckholm, early in the morning, the governor of Drontheim gave orders that his travelling carriage should be got in readiness, with the hope that he would be able to get away while the Countess of Ahlefeld was still asleep; but it has already been said that the countess slept very lightly.

The general had just signed the last of his suggestions to the bishop, in whose hands the administration was to be entrusted while he was away. He had got up from his chair, and put on his fur coat in readiness to go out, when the usher announced the wife of the grand chancellor.

The incident was disconcerting to the old soldier, who could be jovial enough in the face of a volley of artillery, but not when confronted by a scheming woman. He put a good face upon the matter, however, and made his farewells to the wicked countess, and did not allow his annoyance to show on his face, until she bent toward him with a knowing air, which she tried to make extremely confidential.

“Well, noble general, what did he say to you?”

“Who? Poël? He told me that my carriage was waiting.”

“I am speaking of the prisoner at Munckholm, general.”

“Ah!”

“Did he respond to your inquiries in a satisfactory manner?”

“Oh, yes, indeed, my lady countess,” said the governor, whose embarrassment was natural enough.

“Have you proof that he is concerned in the insurrection?”

“Noble lady, he is innocent!”

The exclamation escaped Levin on the impulse of the moment. He stopped abruptly, for he had expressed the conviction of his heart and not that of his judgment.

“He is innocent!” the countess repeated, with an air of consternation, although she thought it might be true, for she trembled lest Schumacker had been able to convince the general of his innocence, when it was so important to the interests of the grand chancellor that he be thought guilty.

The governor had time to reflect; and he responded to the exclamation made by the countess in a tone which reassured her, because it expressed doubt and dissatisfaction.

“Innocent? Yes — if you wish” —

“If I wish, my lord general!” and the wicked woman burst out laughing. The governor was wounded by this show of merriment.

“Noble countess,” he said, “you will permit me to give my report of my interview with the ex-grand chancellor only to the viceroy.”

Then he made a low bow, and went down into the courtyard, where his carriage was waiting.

“Yes,” said the Countess of Ahlefeld, returning to her apartment, “depart, knight-errant, and may your absence deliver us from the protector of our enemies. Go; your departure is the signal for my Frederic’s return. To think of sending the handsomest cavalier in Copenhagen into these horrible mountains; fortunately, it will not be difficult for me now to secure his recall.”

With this thought she addressed herself to her favorite waiting-maid, —

“My dear Lisbeth, you must send to Bergen for two dozen of the little combs that the dandies wear in their hair; you

must find out about the famous Scudéry's latest romance, and you must see that my dear Frederic's monkey has his rose-water bath regularly every morning."

"What, my gracious mistress!" Lisbeth inquired, "is Lord Frederic about to return?"

"Yes, indeed; and in order that he may have some pleasure in seeing me again, we must have everything that he wants. I desire to have a surprise for him when he comes back."

Poor mother!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Bernard runs rapidly along the banks of the Arlanca. He is like a lion emerging from his lair, seeking the hunters, and determined to vanquish them or to die. Is the valiant and determined Spaniard actually on his way? With a quickened gait, and grasping in his hand the great lance in which he puts his faith, Bernard follows the shores of the Arlanca. — *Spanish Romances.*

DESCENDING from the tower, whence he had seen Munchholm beacon, Ordener wearied himself for a long time, seeking on every side for his poor guide, Benignus Spiagudry. Many times he called, and the pulsating echo from the ruins was his sole response. Surprised, but not alarmed, at this extraordinary disappearance, he attributed it to a sudden spasm of terror on the part of the timid keeper; and after having generously reproached himself for having left his companion, even for a few moments, he decided to pass the night on Oëlmœ cliff, to give Spiagudry time to return. So he took some food, and wrapping himself up in his cloak lay down by the dying fire, pressed the lock of hair that Ethel had given him to his lips, and was soon asleep; for one can sleep, even with an anxious heart, when the conscience is tranquil.

At sunrise he was up; but he found no indication of Spiagudry's presence, except the knapsack and cloak, left in the tower, and apparently discarded as preliminary to a hasty departure. Then, despairing of seeing him again, at least on Oëlmœ cliff, Ordener made up his mind to go on his way alone, for on the morrow he was to find Hans of Iceland at Walderhog.

In the opening chapters of this story it was explained that Ordener had early accustomed himself to the fatigues of a

wandering and adventurous life. Having already several times traversed the north of Norway, he had no need of a guide, now that he knew where the brigand was to be found. He therefore took his solitary way toward the north-west, no longer having Benignus Spiagudry with him to tell him how much quartz or feldspar was concealed in every hill, what legend was associated with this and that ruin, and whether certain disturbances of the soil had been caused by an old-time flood or some prehistoric volcanic eruption.

The whole day long he walked among the mountains, which at this point diverge like ribs at intervals from the principal range, which runs the whole length of Norway, and extend in gradually diminishing height to the borders of the sea, where they disappear. The result is, that the coasts of this country are made up of a succession of promontories and bays, and the interior of alternating mountains and valleys, — an exceptional formation, which gives Norway something of the structure of the backbone of a fish.

It was not altogether delightful to travel in such a country. Sometimes the route followed the stony bed of what was once a mountain torrent; sometimes it led across a tottering tree-trunk over the very pathway which the rains of the night before had transformed into a mighty stream.

Ordener travelled on for several hours, perceiving no other indication of human existence in the uncultivated regions about him, except the rare appearance of the arms of a wind-mill on the top of a hill, or the smoke rising from a distant, noisy forge like a great black plume.

From time to time he met a peasant, riding a small gray horse, which made its way along the road with head to the ground, and was less grotesque in its aspect than was its master. Now and then came a dealer in furs, seated in a cart drawn by two reindeer. Behind the cart a long rope would be fastened, the numerous knots that were tied in it being supposed, as they were jolted from stone to stone in the highway, to have a magic influence in frightening off

wolves. If Ordener asked the fur-dealer the way to Walderhog grotto, he would get this answer, —

“Keep steadily to the north-west, till you come to Hervalyn village, then pass through Dodlysax ravine, and to-night you will reach Surb, which is only two miles from Walderhog.”

Thus would run the indifferent response of the nomad trader, who knew nothing except the names and positions of the places along the route which his business obliged him to follow.

If Ordener addressed the same question to the peasant, who was deeply imbued with the traditions of the country and its fireside tales, he would shake his head several times, and pull up his gray horse, saying, —

“Walderhog! Walderhog grotto! That’s where the singing stones are and the dancing bones, and the Iceland demon lives there. It can’t be that your excellency has any idea of going to Walderhog grotto?”

“Yes, indeed, I have,” would be Ordener’s reply.

“Has your excellency, then, lost his mother, or has his farmhouse been burned, or has some neighbor stolen his fat pig?”

“No; nothing of that sort has happened,” the young man would say.

“Then some magician has cast a spell upon his excellency.”

“My good fellow, I ask you to tell me the way to Walderhog.”

“And I am answering your question, my lord. Farewell, and keep always to the north! I know well enough how you go to get there, but I don’t know how you will ever get back again.” And the peasant would move on, making the sign of the cross.

To the depressing monotony of such conditions was added the discomfort of a fine, penetrating rain, which had begun about noon, and greatly increased the difficulties of the road. Very few birds ventured in the air; and as Ordener walked

along, shivering under his cloak, the only feathered creature he could see was the gerfalcon, or fish-hawk, which at the noise of his approach would spring up from the reeds of an adjacent pond, with a fish in its claws.

Night had fully come, when the young traveller, having made his way through the clumps of birch and aspen which bordered Dodlysax ravine, finally came to Surb hamlet, where Spiagudry, if the reader remembers, wanted to make his headquarters. The odor of tar and the smoke of soft coal warned Ordener that he was approaching a fishing settlement. He went up to the first hut which he could see in the darkness. The low, narrow entrance was closed, according to Norwegian custom, with a big transparent fish-skin, which at this moment was illuminated by the reddish, flickering gleam of a fire within. He knocked upon the wooden door-case and called out, —

“A wayfarer !”

“Come in, come in,” a voice responded from the other side ; and at the same moment a ready hand lifted the fish-skin, and Ordener was admitted to the conical dwelling of a Norwegian coast fisherman.

It was a sort of rounded shelter of wood and earth, with a fire burning in the centre, the purplish flame of peat mingling with the clear blaze of pine. Near the fire the fisherman was sitting with his wife and two ragged children, before a table set with wooden plates and earthen cups. On the opposite side, among the nets and oars, two reindeer were sleeping on a bed of leaves and skins, which was long enough to provide additional space for the slumbers of the family and such guests as it might please heaven to bring them. This arrangement of the interior of the hut was not discernible at first glance ; for an acrid and heavy smoke, making its way toward the opening in the summit of the cone, covered everything with a thick, wavering veil.

Ordener had scarcely crossed the threshold, when the fisherman and his wife got up and welcomed him with the utmost

frankness and cordiality. The Norwegian peasants are very fond of visitors, actuated perhaps as much by the sentiment of curiosity, which is very active in them, as by their natural disposition to hospitality.

“My lord,” said the fisherman, “you must be cold and hungry; here is a fire to dry your cloak, and wholesome rindebrod to appease your hunger. Your excellency will deign, later on, to tell us who he is, whence he comes, whither he goes, and what news he has gathered up in his journeying about the country.”

“Yes, my lord,” the woman added; “and you can add to the rindebrod, which is very fine, as my husband and master has said, a dainty bit of salted stock-fish, seasoned with whale-oil. Be seated, my lord stranger.”

“And if your excellency is not fond of St. Usuph’s¹ fare,” the man went on, “just have patience a moment, and I will give him the privilege of eating a quarter of savory roebuck, or at least the wing of a royal pheasant. We are looking for the return of the most skilful hunter in the three provinces. Isn’t that so, my good Maase?”

The name Maase, which the fisherman bestowed upon his wife, is a Norwegian name, meaning sea-gull. The woman accepted it as a matter of course, either because it was actually her name, or had been given her simply out of affection.

“The best hunter,—I should say so, indeed!” she responded heartily. “’Tis my brother, the famous Kannybol, may heaven bless his pathway! He is come to pass a few days with us; and you, my lord stranger, can take from the same cup as he a draught of this good beer. He is a traveller, like you.”

“Many thanks, my worthy hostess,” said Ordener, with a smile; “but I shall be forced to content myself with your appetizing stock-fish and a bit of rindebrod. I am in too much of a hurry to wait for your brother, the famous hunter. I must go on my way as soon as possible.”

¹ St. Usuph is the patron saint of fisherman.

The worthy Maase did not take kindly to the stranger's announcement of a brief stay; but she was flattered by the praises bestowed upon her stock-fish and her brother, and she exclaimed, —

“You are very good, my lord; but how is it that you quit us so soon?”

“It is necessary.”

“You venture out among the mountains at this hour and in such weather?”

“It is a matter of importance.”

The young man's responses excited the curiosity of the fisherman and his wife, and also aroused their astonishment. The fisherman got up and said, —

“You are in the house of Christopher Buldus Braal, fisherman of Surb hamlet.”

“Maase Kennybol is his wife and servant,” the woman added.

When the Norwegian peasants desired to learn a stranger's name in a polite way, their manner was to tell their own.

“And I,” Ordener responded, “am a traveller, who is sure neither of the name he bears nor of the road he would follow.”

This extraordinary response did not seem to be at all satisfactory to fisherman Braal.

“By the crown of Gormon the Old,” he said, “I thought that at this moment there was only one man in Norway who was not sure of his name; and that is the noble Baron of Thorvick, who, 'tis said, is soon to be known as the Count of Danneskiold, in consequence of his brilliant marriage with the chancellor's daughter. At any rate, my good Maase, that is the latest news that I could pick up at Drontheim. I congratulate you, my lord stranger, upon being in the same boat with the viceroy's son, the distinguished Count Guldenlew.”

“Since,” the woman added, with a face blazing with curiosity, — “since your excellency seems to be unable to tell us about yourself, can you not inform us of what is going on in

the world, — for instance, about this great marriage, which my husband has been hearing about ? ”

“ Yes,” said the husband, with a knowing air, “ that is really the latest news. Before another month the viceroy’s son is to marry the grand chancellor’s daughter.”

“ I doubt it,” said Ordener.

“ You doubt it, my lord ! I can assure you, of my own knowledge, that the thing is settled. I had it from sound authority. The one who told me got it from Master Poël, the favorite attendant on the noble Baron of Thorvick, or rather the noble Count of Danneskiöld. Have the waters been troubled by a storm in the last six days ? Has the great match been broken off ? ”

“ I think so,” the young man responded, with a smile.

“ If that is the case, my lord, I was wrong. It is not well to light the fire to fry the fish until the fish is in the net. But is it really broken off ? From whom did you get the news ? ”

“ From no one,” said Ordener. “ I arranged it that way in my own head.”

At this artless speech the fisherman so far forgot the demands of Norwegian courtesy as to burst into a loud laugh.

“ A thousand pardons, my lord, but it is easy to see that you are indeed a traveller and doubtless a foreigner also. Do you really think that events will take place according to your whims, and that the weather will be stormy, or clear off, in accordance with your desire ? ”

At this point the fisherman, who was well informed on national affairs, like all the Norwegian peasantry, began to explain to Ordener why the marriage could not possibly fail to take place. It was essential to the interests of the Ahlefeld family ; the viceroy could not refuse the king’s request, for the king was greatly in favor of it ; and, moreover, it was said that the two persons most closely interested were very much in love with one another. In fact, fisherman Braal had no doubt whatever that the alliance would take place ; he wished

he were as sure of being able on the morrow to kill the cursed dog-fish that infested Masterbick pond.

Ordener felt little disposed to carry on a political discussion with so unpolished a statesman, when the arrival of a new-comer relieved him from his embarrassment.

"'Tis he, — 'tis my brother!" exclaimed old Maase; and nothing but the arrival of her brother would have been able to break in upon the admiring absorption with which she listened to her husband's pretentious words.

While the two children clung noisily about their uncle's neck, the fisherman put out his hand, with much dignity.

"Welcome, brother," he said, and then, turning to Ordener, added, "my lord, this is our brother, Kennybol, the renowned hunter of Kole mountains."

"I salute you cordially," said the mountaineer, doffing his bear-skin cap. "I have but poor luck hunting here on the shore, brother, as you no doubt would make no great haul fishing among the mountains. I believe that I could fill my bag sooner hunting elves and will-o'-the-wisps in Queen Mab's misty forests. Sister Maase, you are the first sea-gull to whom I have been able to say how do you do to-day. Well, friends, God keep you in peace! 'Tis for this paltry heath-cock that the chief hunter in Drontheimhus has tramped the clearings till this late hour, and in such weather!"

Saying this, he drew from his game-bag a white bird, and threw it on the table, swearing that such a skinny beast was not worth a musket-shot.

"But," he added, under his breath, "faithful arquebuse, you shall soon find nobler game. If you cease to puncture elk-hides and chamois-skins, you shall at least make holes in green coats and red jerkins."

This half-audible speech served to arouse Maase's curiosity.

"Eh?" she demanded, "what are you saying, brother?"

"I say that there is always a babbling sprite dancing under a woman's tongue."

"You're right, brother Kennybol," exclaimed the fisher-

man. "These daughters of Eve have all their mother's curiosity. Were you speaking about green coats?"

"Brother Braal," the hunter responded, with an expression of annoyance, "I confide my secrets only to my musket, because then I am sure they will not be repeated."

"They say in the village," the fisherman obstinately persisted, "that there is to be a revolt among the miners. Do you know anything about it, brother?"

The mountaineer put on his cap, and pulled it over his eyes, looking sideways at the stranger. Then he leaned over toward the fisherman, and said curtly and in a low tone, —

"Silence!"

"Brother Kennybol," said the fisherman slowly, shaking his head, "the fish may be dumb, but all the same it gets into the net."

For a moment nothing more was said. The two brothers looked at one another searchingly; the children were pulling feathers out of the bird that lay on the table; the good dame listened to what was not being said; and Ordener quietly observed the scene about him.

"If you have meagre fare to-day," said the hunter suddenly, with an evident desire to change the conversation, "you will be better served to-morrow. Brother Braal, you can try for the king of fish; I promise you bear's oil, by way of sauce."

"Bear's oil!" exclaimed Maase. "Has a bear been seen around here? Patrick, Regner, my children, you mustn't go out of doors. A bear!"

"Take it easy, sister, you'll have nothing to fear from him after to-morrow. Yes, I saw a bear about two miles from Surb, — a white bear. He seemed to be carrying off a man, or some kind of an animal. Perhaps it was a goatherd, for goatherds clothe themselves in skins. At any rate, he was too far away for me to see him. The surprising part of it was, he carried his prey on his back, and not in his teeth."

"Indeed, brother?"

"Yes; and the animal must have been dead, for it made no movement to defend itself."

"But," the fisherman inquired sagaciously, "if it was dead, how did it stay in place on the bear's back?"

"That's what I don't understand. Well, in any case, 'twill be the bear's last dinner. As I came into the village, I gave the word to six good fellows, and to-morrow, sister Maase, I shall bring you the prettiest bit of white fur that ever ran over mountain snows."

"Look out, brother," said the woman; "'twas a strange thing you saw. That bear may be the devil."

"Are you off your head?" the mountaineer interrupted, with a laugh. "The devil changed into a bear! Into a cat, or an ape, if you like; that has been seen, — but into a bear! Why, by St. Eldon the Exorcist, you would excite the pity of a child or an old woman with your superstitions."

"Brother," said the poor woman, hanging her head, "you were my master before my venerated husband cast eyes on me; do as your guardian angel tells you."

"But," the fisherman asked of the mountaineer, "in what direction did you see the bear?"

"On the way from Smiasen to Walderhog."

"Walderhog!" exclaimed the woman, making the sign of the cross.

"Walderhog!" repeated Ordener.

"But, my brother," the fisherman went on, "I hope you were not going to Walderhog grotto?"

"I? Heaven forbid, — it was the bear!"

"And are you going there to-morrow in search of him?" Maase interrupted, in terror.

"Not at all; how can you think, my friends, that even a bear would make his home in a cavern where" — He paused, and the three crossed themselves.

"You are right," the fisherman responded, "instinct warns beasts about such things."

"My excellent hosts," said Ordener, "what is there so alarming in regard to Walderhog grotto?"

All three looked at him in gaping astonishment, as if they could not understand the purport of his question.

"King Walder's tomb is there, is it not?" the young man inquired.

"Yes," the woman responded, "a singing tomb of stone."

"And that is not all," said the fisherman.

"No," she went on; "at night the bones of dead men dance there."

"And that is not all," said the mountaineer. All three were silent, as if they dared not go on.

"Well," Ordener inquired, "what else is there that is extraordinary?"

"Young man," said the mountaineer solemnly, "you should not speak so lightly when you see an old gray wolf like me in a shiver."

"I would like, however, to know all the details about the marvellous things that take place at Walderhog grotto, for that is precisely where I am going," the young man responded, with a gentle smile. This declaration overwhelmed his three auditors with terror.

"To Walderhog,— great heavens; you are going to Walderhog!"

"And he said that," the fisherman went on, "as one would say, 'I am going to Lœvig to sell my codfish,' or 'to Ralph's clearing to fish for herring!' To Walderhog, great God!"

"Wretched young man," exclaimed the woman, "were you born without a guardian angel? Is there no saint in heaven who is your patron? Alas, it must be so, since you do not even seem to know your own name!"

"And what motive," the mountaineer interrupted, "could induce your excellency to go to that horrible place?"

"I wanted to ask a question of somebody," Ordener responded.

The astonishment of the three listeners increased in proportion to their curiosity.

"Listen, my lord stranger; you seem not to be acquainted

with this country. Your excellency is laboring under a mistake ; it can't be that Walderhog is the place that you want to go to. More than that," the mountaineer added, "if you wanted to ask a question of any human being, you wouldn't find one there."

"None but the demon," said the woman.

"The demon ? What demon ?"

"Yes," she continued, "the one that the tomb sings for and that the bones dance for."

"You don't know, then, my lord," said the fisherman, lowering his voice and drawing near to Ordener, "you do not know that Walderhog grotto is the usual dwelling of" —

"My husband and master," the woman interrupted, "do not utter that name ; it brings misfortune."

"Whose dwelling ?" Ordener asked.

"Of Beelzebub incarnate," said Kennybol.

"Well, really, my worthy hosts, I don't know what you are driving at. I was told very definitely that Walderhog was inhabited by Hans of Iceland."

A threefold cry of horror echoed in the cabin. "Ah, yes — you know him — he is the demon !"

The woman pulled her roughly fashioned cap down over her head, protesting in the presence of all the saints that it was not she who had uttered the name.

When the fisherman had recovered a little from his stupefaction, he looked earnestly at Ordener, as if there were something about the young man that he could not understand.

"I believed, my lord traveller, that if I lived to be as old as my father, who died at one hundred and twenty, I never should be called upon to point out the road to Walderhog by any human creature endowed with reason and believing in God."

"That's true," Maase exclaimed ; "but his excellency will not go to the cursed grotto. To put his foot inside of it, he would have to make a bargain with the devil !"

"I am going, my worthy hosts, and the greatest service

that you can render me will be to show me the shortest road."

"The shortest way to the place where you want to go," said the fisherman, "would be for you to jump from the first high rock you find into the nearest torrent."

"Is it the same, then," Ordener inquired tranquilly, "to prefer a profitless death to a beneficent danger?"

Braal shook his head, while his brother scrutinized the young adventurer very closely.

"I understand," the fisherman suddenly exclaimed; "you want to get the thousand royal crowns that the high syndic offered for the Iceland demon's head." Ordener smiled. "My young lord," the fisherman went on, greatly moved, "I beg of you to renounce this project. I am old and poor; but I would not give what remains to me of life for your thousand royal crowns, if it were only a single day."

The supplicating and compassionate look which the woman bestowed upon the stranger seemed to demand a response to her husband's entreaty.

"The object that I have in hunting out this brigand, whom you call a demon," Ordener hastened to reply, "is more important than the one you have suggested. It is in behalf of others and not for myself that" —

The mountaineer, who had not taken his eyes from Ordener, now interposed.

"I understand, too, why you are hunting for the Iceland demon."

"I want to force him to fight," said the young man.

"That's it," said Kennybol; "you are intrusted with important interests, are you not?"

"I told you so just now."

The mountaineer approached the young man with a confidential air; and it was not without extreme astonishment that Ordener heard him murmur in his ear, —

"In behalf of Count Schumacker of Griffenfeld, is it not?"

"My good fellow," Ordener exclaimed, "how do you know?"

It was indeed difficult for him to understand how a Norwegian mountaineer could be aware of the secret, which he had confided to no one, not even to General Levin.

"I wish you success," Kennybol went on, with his air of mystery; "you are a noble young man, to put yourself, in this way, at the service of the oppressed."

The astonishment that Ordener felt was so great that he with difficulty found words to ask the mountaineer how he had learned of the object of his journey.

"Hush," said Kennybol, with his finger on his lips; "I hope that you will secure what you want at Walderhog. My arm, like yours, is devoted to the Munckholm prisoner." Then raising his voice, before Ordener could reply, he said, "Brother, and good sister also, welcome this worthy young man as a brother. Come, I believe that supper is ready."

"What?" said Maase, "you have then persuaded his excellency to give up the idea of making a visit to the demon?"

"Sister, pray that no evil may come to him. He is a noble and worthy young man. Now, good my lord, take some food and get a little sleep. To-morrow I will show you the road, and we will make the quest together, — you in pursuit of the devil you seek for, and I to track the bear."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Comrade, oh, my comrade, of what comrade wast thou born? Of what child of men art thou the offspring, that thou darest to attack Farnir? — *Edda*.

THE first rays of the rising sun had just begun to redden the highest points of the cliffs along the shore, when a fisherman, who had come at dawn to cast his nets a few hundred yards out from the entrance to Walderhog grotto, saw a figure that seemed to be wrapped up in either a cloak or a shroud climbing down the rocks and disappearing within the gloomy archway of the cavern. Struck with terror, he commended his boat and soul to St. Usuph, and hastened home to inform his alarmed family that he had seen one of the spectres that haunt Hans of Iceland's palace, returning to the grotto at break of day.

This ghostly visitor, whose exploits furnished entertainment and a fearful joy for many a long winter, was Ordener, the noble son of Norway's viceroy, who, while the two kingdoms believed that he was devoting himself to attendance upon his haughty betrothed, was venturing, single handed and unknown, to risk his life for her to whom he had pledged his heart and his future, the daughter of a state prisoner.

Melancholy prophecies and sinister predictions had accompanied him on this part of his journey. He had just left the fisherman's family, bidding farewell to the worthy Maase as she knelt in prayer for him at the threshold. Kennybol, the mountaineer, and his six companions, who had shown him his road, had left him half a mile from Walderhog; and the intrepid hunters, who had gone laughingly in pursuit of the bear, sent prolonged and frightened glances down the path that the adventurous traveller was following.

The young man entered Walderhog grotto as one enters a long-wished-for haven. He experienced something like celestial joy in thinking that the object of his life was about to be accomplished, and that perhaps in a few moments more he should be shedding his blood for Ethel. Although he was on the point of attacking the most redoubtable brigand of the whole province, a monster, and it might be a demon, his fancy did not dwell at all upon the horrible possibilities of such an encounter; he saw nothing but the winsome image of the captive maiden, as she prayed for him in the prison oratory. If it had been any one but she for whom he had made the venture, he would perhaps have reflected scornfully upon the perils which he had come so far to seek; but does reflection find a place in a youthful heart, at the time when it is filled with the exaltations of noble devotion and self-sacrificing love?

He went on with head erect under the vaulted roof, from which the noise of his footsteps echoed back like the tramp of an advancing army; and he did not even cast a glance at the stalactites and basaltic shapes that hung above his head over the heaps of moss, seaweed, and lichens, — a complex array of grotesque forms, which more than once had been taken by the superstitious credulity of the Norwegian peasants for a gathering of demons or a procession of phantoms. With the same indifference he passed by King Walder's tomb, with which were associated so many lugubrious traditions; and the only voice he heard was the moaning of the wind as it swept through the funereal galleries.

He continued his journey under the winding archway, which was dimly lit up by crevices, half-filled with grass and heather. His foot often struck against objects that rolled away along the rocky floor with a hollow sound, having the appearance, in the obscurity, of broken skulls, or long rows of white teeth, exposed to their roots. But no terror left its impress on his noble soul.

His only emotion was one of surprise that he had not already met the formidable inhabitant of the awful grotto.

He came to a sort of rounded hall, that had been excavated by nature in the side of the rock. There the subterranean path that he had been following came to an end, and the only openings that were visible were great fissures, through which he could see the mountains and the woods without. Astonished at having traversed the ill-omened cavern so fruitlessly, he began to despair of meeting the brigand, when a structure of unusual form, in the centre of the hall, attracted his attention. Three long and massive pieces of stone stood upright, carrying a large, square block, like three pillars upholding a roof. Under this gigantic table was a sort of altar, made of a single block of granite, and with a circular opening on its upper face. Ordener recognized one of the colossal Druidical monuments which he had often seen in his travels through Norway, and of which the most extraordinary examples perhaps are the Lokmariaker and Carnac monuments in France, — marvellous structures, set up like tents for a day, and yet having a solidity that has made them last for ages.

Absorbed in thought, the young man leaned mechanically over the altar, where the stone about the circular depression was stained to brown, so often had it drunk deeply of the blood of human sacrifice. All at once he was startled from his tranquillity. A voice, that seemed to come from the stone, struck upon his ear.

“Young man, the feet that brought you to this place stand upon the verge of the tomb.”

He drew himself up, and his hand went to his sword-hilt, while an echo, faint as the voice of one at the point of death, repeated distinctly in the recesses of the cavern, —

“Young man, the feet that brought you to this place stand upon the verge of the tomb.”

At that moment a horrible head, red-haired and grinning atrociously, rose from the other side of the altar.

“Young man,” the voice repeated, “thus it is, — the feet that brought you to this spot stand on the verge of the tomb.”

"And the hand that came with me rests upon a sword," the young man responded, without trepidation.

The monster came from behind the altar, and showed his thick-set, sinewy figure, his savage, blood-stained clothing, his crooked fingers, and a heavy stone axe.

"Here I am," he said, with a wild beast's roar.

"Here am I," responded Ordener.

"I expected you."

"I did more than that," the intrepid young man replied; "I came in search of you."

"Do you know who I am?" said the brigand, folding his arms.

"Yes."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Not in the least now."

"You had some fear, then, in coming here?" and the monster wagged his head triumphantly.

"That I might not find you."

"You dare to face me; and your feet have been stumbling over human bones."

"To-morrow, perhaps, they will stumble over yours."

The little man was seized with a paroxysm of anger. Ordener stood motionless, in a calm and haughty attitude.

"Take care," the brigand muttered, "I shall fall upon you like a Norway hailstorm on a parasol."

"I ask for no other shield against you."

There seemed to be something in Ordener's glance that quelled the monster. He began to tear the hair out of his cloak with his nails, as a tiger claws up grass before springing on his prey.

"You teach me what pity is," he said.

"And you teach me nothing but scorn."

"Child, your voice is soft and your skin is fresh, like the voice and skin of a young girl. What death will you have from me?"

"Your own."

"You do not know that I am a demon," the little man said, with a laugh, — "that I have within me the spirit of Ingolphus the Exterminator."

"I know that you are a brigand, and that you kill to get gold."

"You are wrong," the monster interrupted; "it is to get blood."

"Were you not paid by the Ahlefelds for killing Captain Dispolsen?"

"What do you mean by that? What names are those?"

"Did you not know that it was Captain Dispolsen that you killed on Urchtal sands?"

"It may be so; but I forgot about him, as I shall forget about you three days hence."

"You don't know the Count of Ahlefeld, who paid you for taking an iron casket from the captain?"

"Ahlefeld — wait; yes, I do know him. Yesterday I drank his son's blood from my son's skull."

"Were you not contented with your wages?" said Ordener, with a shudder of horror.

"What wages?" the brigand demanded.

"Listen. The sight of you is offensive to me; there must be an end. A week ago you took an iron casket from one of your victims, a Munckholm officer."

"A Munckholm officer!" the brigand snarled, starting forward; and then he added, with a look of surprise, "are you also a Munckholm officer?"

"No," said Ordener.

"So much the worse!" And the brigand's features again became gloomy.

"Listen," Ordener persisted; "where is the iron casket that you took from the captain?"

"By Ingolphus!" the little man said, after a moment's thought, "that evil casket occupies many minds. I can assure you that there won't be so eager a hunt after the box that holds your bones, if they are ever brought together for sepulchre."

The words showed Ordener that the brigand knew something about the casket, and this revived his hopes for its recovery.

"Tell me what you did with the casket. Has it gone to the Count of Ahlefeld?"

"No."

"You lie, for you are laughing."

"Think what you like. What difference does it make to me?"

The monster had taken a jocular tone, which aroused Ordener's suspicion. He saw that there was nothing for it but to put him in a rage, or intimidate him if it were possible.

"Understand me," he said, lifting his voice; "you must give me that casket." The other responded with a savage chuckle. "You must give it to me!" the young man repeated, in thunderous tones.

"Are you used to giving orders to buffaloes and bears?" the monster replied, with the same laugh.

"I would give that one to a demon in hell!"

"You will be able to do that very quickly."

Ordener drew his sword, which shone in the darkness like a flash of sunlight.

"Obey!"

"Remember," the other responded, waving his axe, "I might have broken your bones and sucked your blood when you first came, but I held back. I was curious to see if the frisky little sparrow would fall upon the vulture."

"Scoundrel," shouted Ordener, "defend yourself!"

"This is the first time that speech was ever made to me," the brigand muttered, gnashing his teeth.

Speaking thus, he jumped upon the granite altar, and crouched like a leopard, waiting to spring upon the hunter from the top of a rock, and to take him by surprise. From thence he fixed his gaze upon the young man, and seemed to be considering the best way to make the assault. It would have been all up with Ordener if he had waited, but he did not



"THE BRIGAND JUMPED UPON THE GRANITE ALTAR."

give the brigand time to reflect; he sprang impetuously upon him, thrusting the point of his sword at that horrible face.

Then began the most terrific combat that imagination can depict. The little man, standing on the altar like a statue on its pedestal, looked like one of the horrible idols which in prehistoric times were the recipients in that place of impious sacrifices and sacrilegious offerings. His movements were so rapid, that, on whatever side Ordener made his attack, he was always confronted with the monster's face and the waving axe. He would have been cut in pieces in the first stages of the contest, if he had not had the happy thought of wrapping his cloak around his left arm, and receiving the greater part of his enemy's blows upon that elastic protection. For several moments they made fruitless and incredible efforts to wound one another. The little man's glaring eyes started from their sockets. Surprised at being so vigorously and audaciously withstood by an adversary apparently so feeble, the monster dropped his savage chuckle for an expression of sombre rage. The frightful immobility of the monster's features and the calm intrepidity of Ordener's face were in startling contrast with the energy of their movements and the vivacity of their attacks.

Nothing could be heard but the clash of weapons, the hurried steps of the young man, and the quickened respiration of the two combatants, until the little man uttered a terrible roar. The head of his axe caught in the folded cloak. He straightened up and shook his arm furiously; but he only got the handle more closely involved in the cloak, which at each attempt twisted more closely around it. The brigand saw the young man's blade approaching his breast.

"Hear me once more," said Ordener triumphantly; "will you give me the iron casket that you stole in so cowardly a way?"

The little man was silent for a moment, then exclaimed, with another roar, "A thousand curses, no!"

"Reflect!" Ordener said, without relaxing his victorious and threatening attitude.

"No; I told you no!" repeated the brigand.

"Very well," said the noble young man, dropping his sword, "get your axe loose from the folds of my cloak, and we will try it again."

"Child, you are too generous," the monster responded, with a disdainful laugh; "I have no need of such kindness!"

Before the surprised Ordener could turn his head, the monster put his foot on the shoulder of his loyal adversary, and at one bound was a dozen feet away, down the hall. With another leap he sprang upon Ordener, and hung upon him, like a panther clinging tooth and nail to the flanks of some great lion. His nails sank into the young man's shoulders, his bony knees gripped his hips, while his terrible face confronted Ordener's gaze with its bloody mouth and wild beast's fangs, ready to flay him. The monster spoke no more, no human words came from his panting throat; but a dull bellow, mingled with harsh, sharp cries, served to express his rage. He was more hideous than a ferocious beast, more monstrous than a demon; he had the appearance of a man deprived of all the attributes of humanity.

Ordener gave way under the little man's assault, and would have fallen at the unexpected attack, if one of the great pillars of the Druidical monument had not stood behind him and given him support. He leaned over, gasping under the weight of his formidable enemy. It must be remembered that the incidents we have been describing took place in less time than is required to summon them before the mind, and from this fact one can have some idea of the horrible climax of the struggle.

As has been said, the young man gave way, but he did not tremble. In his thoughts he said farewell to Ethel, and that love-inspired tribute acted like a prayer, reviving his strength. He put both arms about the monster, and, seizing his sword midway, he brought the point straight down upon his assail-

ant's back. The brigand set up a terrific yell, and, throwing himself over, broke Ordener's hold, got loose from the clutch of his intrepid adversary, and fell to the ground several steps away, carrying in his teeth a piece of the green cloak, which he had bitten out in his fury.

He sprang up again with the suppleness and agility of a young chamois, and the combat was renewed for the third time, with more ferocity than ever. He had fallen by chance near a heap of fragments of rock, which had been overgrown with moss and brambles for centuries. Two men of ordinary strength would scarcely have been able to lift the smallest of these fragments. The brigand seized one of them, and lifted it above his head, and held it there, facing Ordener. His expression at that moment was frightful. The missile flew violently forward and fell heavily to the ground, the young man barely having the time to evade it. The granite block was shattered at the foot of the subterranean wall with a horrible noise, that was intensified many-fold as it re-echoed from the depths of the grotto.

Ordener had scarcely recovered his composure before the brigand had a second mass of stone uplifted. Irritated at so cowardly an attack, the youth sprang toward the little man, sword in hand, with the object of putting an end to such tactics; but the great stone shot forward like a thunderbolt, and, sweeping with a revolving motion through the oppressive obscurity of the cavern, it struck in its passage the slender and naked blade of Ordener's weapon, and broke it short off, as if it had been a strip of glass, while the vaulted roof resounded with the monster's savage laughter. Ordener was disarmed.

"Have you anything to ask of God or of the devil before you die?" the monster shouted.

His eyes darted flame, his muscles were convulsed with rage and joy, and he sprang in a spasm of impatience toward the axe, which lay on the ground, entangled in the cloak, Poor Ethel!

All at once a distant roaring sound came from without. The monster paused. The noise increased; the shouting of men mingled with the plaintive growling of a bear. The brigand listened. The cries of distress went on. He quickly seized his axe, and, turning from Ordener, sprang through one of the fissures which have previously been spoken of, and which gave access to the outer air. Ordener, in his surprise at being thus forsaken, also hastened towards one of these natural doorways, and saw in the clearing close by a great white bear, held at bay by seven hunters, among whom he thought that he could distinguish Kennybol, whose words had impressed him so strongly the preceding night. He turned around. The brigand was no longer in the grotto, and from without he heard a terrible voice exclaiming, —

“Friend! Friend! I’m coming; here I am!”

CHAPTER XXX.

Pierre, good lad, has lost his all at dice. — RÉGNIER.

THE regiment of Munckholm arquebusiers is marching through the passes between Drontheim and Skongen. Sometimes it follows along the banks of a mountain stream, and one can see the line of bayonets creeping through the ravines, like a great serpent with gleaming scales; sometimes it winds upward in a spiral over a mountain peak, and then resembles the bronze battalions on ancient triumphal columns. The soldiers move along in slouching and careless fashion, their whole bearing expressive of ill-humor and weariness, because these noble heroes are content with nothing but combat or repose. The coarse jests and antique sarcasms which delighted them so much the day before give them no amusement now; the air is sharp and the sky clouded. The only time when a laugh comes from the ranks is when a sutler-woman has an awkward fall from her little horse's back, or a tin saucepan clatters from rock to rock to the bottom of the precipice.

Out of desire to find some distraction from the monotony of the march, Lieutenant Randmer, a young Danish baron, comes up to old Captain Lory, soldier of fortune. The captain strides along, in sombre and silent fashion, with a heavy, determined tread. The lieutenant is light and agile, and brandishes a switch which he has snatched from the brushwood along the road.

"Well, captain, what's the matter with you? You look melancholy."

"There seems to be reason enough for that," the elder officer responded, without raising his head.

"There, there; let's have no fretting. Look at me; am I a blighted being? And yet I warrant that I have at least as much reason to be so as you."

"I doubt it, Baron Randmer; I have lost everything I had, my whole fortune."

"Captain Lory, we are exactly in the same boat. It is not a fortnight since Lieutenant Alberick won from me my handsome castle at Randmer and all its appurtenances with one cast of the dice. I am ruined; but shall I be any the less gay for that reason?"

"Lieutenant," the captain responded, in an extremely sorrowful tone, "you lost nothing but your fine castle; I have lost my dog."

At this response, the young man's frivolous countenance seemed to waver between laughter and sympathy.

"Captain," he said, "cheer up; why, I, who have lost a castle" —

"What does all that come to?" the other interrupted. "And besides, you'll get another castle."

"And you will find another dog."

"I find another dog?" said the older man, shaking his head; "I shall never find my poor Drake again." He paused, and great tears fell from his eyes over his rough, weather-beaten face. "I never loved anybody but him," he went on. "I never knew either father or mother; God grant them peace, and my poor Drake too! Lieutenant Randmer, he saved my life in the Pomeranian war; I called him Drake in honor of the famous admiral. That good dog, — he was always the same to me, whatever might be my fortunes. After Oholfen, the great General Shaack gave him a pat, and said to me, 'You've a fine dog there, Sergeant Lory!' for at that time I was only a sergeant."

"Ah," the young baron interrupted, brandishing his switch, "it must seem queer to be nothing but a sergeant."

The old soldier of fortune did not hear; he seemed to be talking to himself, and the words he let fall were scarcely audible.

“Poor Drake, to come out of so many tight places, safe and sound, and then be drowned at last like a cat, in Drontheim bay! My poor dog, my brave friend, you deserved to die, like me, on the field of battle!”

“My good captain,” the lieutenant exclaimed, “how can you be so sad? Perhaps we shall have a fight to-morrow.”

“Yes,” the old captain responded disdainfully, “against noble foes!”

“What, those miner brigands and mountaineer devils!”

“Stone-cutters and highwaymen,—dullards, who don’t even know how to form in pork’s-head or a Gustavus Adolphus wedge! That’s the sort of stuff they put out before a man like me, who have been through all the Pomeranian wars and fought the Scania and Dalecarlia campaigns,—who have fought under the glorious General Shaack and under the valiant Count of Guldenlew!”

“But you don’t know,” Randmer interrupted, “that the bandits have a great fellow for a leader, a giant as strong and savage as Goliath; a brigand, who drinks nothing but human blood; a demon, quite the equal of old Satan?”

“Who is he?” the other asked.

“Why, the famous Hans of Iceland!”

“Brrr! I’ll bet this famous general doesn’t even know how to make ready with a musket in four movements, or load an imperial carbine!” Randmer broke forth in uncontrollable laughter. “Oh, laugh away,” the captain went on. “It will be great sport, of course, to cross swords with pickaxes and lances with dung-forks! Worthy foes, these are; my good Drake would not have deigned to bite their legs!”

The captain was proceeding with his energetic expressions of wrath, when he was interrupted by the arrival of an officer, who ran up to him, all out of breath.

“Captain Lory! My dear Randmer!”

“Well?” they both replied together.

“My friends, I am frozen with horror! Ahlefeld, Lieutenant Ahlefeld, the son of the grand chancellor,—you knew

him, my dear Baron Randmer, — Frederic the dandy, the fop ! ”

“ Yes,” the young baron responded ; “ a great dandy ! However, at the last ball at Charlottenburg my costume made more of a sensation than his. But what has happened to him ? ”

“ I know whom you are speaking of,” Lory interposed ; “ Frederic Ahlefeld, lieutenant in the third company, which has blue lapels. He’s rather negligent of his duties.”

“ There won’t be any more complaints about him, Captain Lory.”

“ How’s that ? ” said Randmer.

“ He’s in garrison at Wahlstrom,” the old captain went on coldly.

“ Exactly,” said the other ; “ the colonel has just received a message. Poor Frederic ! ”

“ But tell us what it is, Captain Bollar ; you frighten me.”

“ Brrr ! ” old Lory went on, “ the fop missed roll-call, as he often does, and his captain has put the grand chancellor’s son in the guard-house. That, no doubt, is the misfortune that has disturbed you so much.”

“ Captain Lory,” said Bollar, tapping the other on the shoulder, “ Lieutenant Ahlefeld has been eaten alive ! ”

The two captains stared solemnly at one another ; and Randmer, recovering from his momentary astonishment, broke once more into hearty laughter.

“ Ha, ha, Captain Bollar, you must always have your joke ; but you can’t take me in this time, I promise you ! ”

The lieutenant folded his arms, and gave free scope to his mirth, swearing that what amused him most was the credulity with which Lory had accepted Bollar’s little story. The story itself, he said, was really quite droll ; and it was a most diverting idea to think that Frederic, who had always been so absurdly particular about his complexion, had been devoured raw.

“ Randmer,” said Bollar seriously, “ you are a fool. I tell

you that Ahlefeld is dead. I got it from the colonel, — dead !”

“Oh, how well he plays his part,” the baron responded, still laughing; “how amusing he is !”

Bollar shrugged his shoulders, and turned to old Lory, who calmly asked him for particulars.

“Yes, really, my dear Captain Bollar,” the lieutenant added, still laughing, “tell us in what way the poor chap was eaten. Did a wolf breakfast on him, or a bear have him for supper ?”

“The colonel,” said Bollar, “has just received a despatch, informing him in the first place that the Wahlstrom garrison is falling back upon us, before a considerable force of insurgents.” Old Lory frowned. “And secondly,” Bollar went on, “that Lieutenant Frederic Ahlefeld went hunting three days ago in the mountains, near Arbar ruins, and there fell in with a monster, who carried him into a cave and devoured him.”

At this point Lieutenant Randmer’s hilarity became wholly irrepressible.

“Ha, ha, how our good Lory takes in these fairy tales ! That’s right; look as serious as you can, my dear Bollar. You are admirably droll. You don’t tell us, though, what sort of a monster or ogre or vampire it was that carried off the lieutenant and made way with him, as if he had been a six days’ kid ?”

“I won’t tell you,” Bollar muttered impatiently; “but I’ll tell Lory, who is not so absurdly incredulous. My dear Lory, the monster that drank Frederic’s blood was Hans of Iceland.”

“The leader of the brigands !” the old officer exclaimed.

“Well, my good Lory,” said the jovial Randmer, “must one know the imperial drill to make such use as that of one’s jaws ?”

“Baron Randmer,” said Bollar, “you are a good deal like Ahlefeld; take care that you don’t meet with the same fate.”

"I declare once more," the young man exclaimed, "that the most amusing thing about this business is Captain Bollar's imperturbability."

"And what alarms me most," Bollar replied, "is the unquenchable gayety of Lieutenant Randmer."

At this moment a group of officers, engaged in lively conversation, came up to the three whose utterances have been reported.

"By Jove," Randmer exclaimed, "I must entertain them with Bollar's romance! Comrades," he added, "are you aware that poor Frederic Ahlefeld has been crunched alive by that barbarous Hans of Iceland?"

With this he gave vent to another outburst of laughter, which to his great surprise was received by the newcomers with shouts of indignation.

"What? You laugh! I didn't suppose that Randmer would repeat such news in such a way. To laugh at such a misfortune!"

"What," said Randmer uneasily, "can it possibly be true?"

"Why, you told us so yourself!" every one exclaimed. "Don't you have any faith in your own words?"

"But I thought it was one of Bollar's jokes."

"If it had been a joke, it would have been in very bad taste," said one of the older officers; "but unfortunately it is not a joke. Our colonel, Baron Voethaün, has just received the fatal tidings."

"What a horrible thing! It is terrible!" were the exclamations heard on every side.

"We shall be obliged, then," said one, "to fight wolves and bears that have human faces!"

"We shall be shot at," said another, "without knowing the position of the enemy; we shall be killed, one by one, like pheasants in a battue."

"Ahlefeld's death makes one shudder," said Bollar, in a solemn tone. "Our regiment is unfortunate. Dispolsen's death, the fate of the three soldiers at Cascadthymore, and

now Ahlefeld, — three tragic incidents in a very short space of time."

Young Baron Randmer, who had been silent for a while, roused himself from his revery.

"'Tis incredible," he said, "Frederic was such a good dancer !"

After this profound observation, he relapsed again into silence, while Captain Lory declared that he was greatly upset at the young lieutenant's death ; and he informed Toric Belfast, the second arquebusier, that the metal trimmings of his crossbelt were not polished with their customary degree of brilliancy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Hush, hush; a man is coming down from up there on a ladder!"

"Oh, yes; it's a spy."

"Heaven could accord me no greater favor than by giving me the power to deliver you — my life. I'm at your service; but tell me, I beg of you, who commands this army."

"The Count of Barcelona."

"What count?"

"Well, what is it?"

"One of the enemy's spies, general."

"Where do you come from?"

"I came here, not knowing in the least what I should find; what I see is very unexpected."

LOPE DE VEGA: *La Fuerza Lastimosa*.

THERE is something sinister and desolate in the appearance of a flat, unwooded country, when the sun has set, and when one is walking alone through fields of dry stubble, as the cricket chirps monotonously, and great formless masses of cloud hang along the horizon like motionless spectres.

Such was the impression that Ordener received, in his melancholy meditations on the night after his futile encounter with the Iceland brigand. Dumbfounded for a moment by the sudden disappearance of the foe, he had thought first of going in pursuit; but he lost his way in the heather, and he wandered all day through a territory which continually became more wild and unproductive, without meeting with any trace of man. At nightfall he found himself in the midst of a great plain, with an open horizon all about him, and with no prospect of shelter, although the young traveller was exhausted with fatigue and the need of food.

All would still have been endurable, if his bodily sufferings

had not been aggravated by the sorrow that filled his soul. He had come to the end of his journey without accomplishing the object that he had in view. Even the airy illusions of hope, that had drawn him in pursuit of the brigand, had vanished; and now nothing remained to sustain a heart weighed down with a multitude of discouraging thoughts that had suddenly come upon him. What should he do? How could he go back to Schumacker, unless he could carry the means of Ethel's safety? How terrible were the evils that would have been obviated, if he had been able to get possession of the ill-omened casket! And his marriage with Ulrica Ahlefeld! If he could at least deliver Ethel from her undeserved captivity; if he could only fly with her to happiness in some far-off exile!

He wrapped his cloak about him, and lay down upon the ground. The sky was black, a stormy break in the clouds now and then only making more oppressive the darkness, which was like that of a funeral pall; and a cold wind blew over the plain. The young man gave but little heed to the signs of a violent and approaching tempest; and even if he had been able to discover an asylum where he might take refuge from the storm and rest from his fatigue, how would he have been able to escape from his misfortune, and gain immunity from his thoughts?

All at once a confused medley of human voices came to his ear. He raised himself on his elbow in his surprise, and saw, some distance away, what looked like shadows moving about in the obscurity. He looked more closely, and saw a light, surrounded by a mysterious group; and as he continued to gaze he was astonished to see the phantasmal figures drop, one after the other, into the earth. They all disappeared.

Ordener was above the superstitions of his time and his country. His serious and well-trained mind disdained the empty credulity and fantastic terror that torment the infancy of peoples, as they do the infancy of men. There was, however, in the strange appearances he had witnessed, something

so unnatural that it inspired awe in spite of reason, for no one knows if the spirits of the dead do not sometimes come back to earth.

He arose, making the sign of the cross, and went toward the place where the shadows had disappeared. Great drops of rain had begun to fall, his cloak was blown out like a sail, and the plume on his cap, vibrating in the wind, struck against his face. He paused suddenly. A flash of lightning revealed, a few paces in front of him, a large, well-shaped opening, into which he would inevitably have fallen if it had not been for the illumination from the clouds. He drew near the opening. Down below, at a terrifying depth, a light was dimly shining; and it cast a reddish tint over the lower portion of the great cylinder, hollowed out in the bowels of the earth. This distant glow, which looked as if it might come from a magic fire lighted by gnomes, seemed to magnify the immeasurable stretch of darkness which the eye was obliged to traverse in order to reach it.

The intrepid young man leaned over the abyss and listened. A distant sound of voices came to his ear. He felt convinced now that the creatures who had so strangely appeared and disappeared before his eyes had gone down into this orifice; and he felt an irresistible desire, probably because he was so inspired by destiny, to go down after them, even if he were following spectres into one of the mouths of hell. Moreover, the tempest had burst in all its fury, and the shaft would provide him with convenient shelter. But how was he to get down? What method had been taken by those whom he wished to follow, if they had not really been phantoms? A second flash of lightning came to his assistance, and revealed at his feet the upper portion of a ladder, which extended into the depths. It was made of a strong, upright beam, pierced horizontally at intervals with short iron bars, for the support of the feet and hands of those adventurous enough to enter.

Ordener did not hesitate. He was soon hanging from the rude ladder, and descending into the depths, without knowing

whether he would be able to get safely to the bottom, or whether he would ever again look upon the sun. The darkness over his head soon became so dense that he could only distinguish the sky by the bluish flashes of lightning with which it was frequently illuminated. After a little, the heavy rain that beat upon the surface of the ground came to him only as a fine, misty spray. The blasts of wind that swept impetuously over the opening he heard only as a distant moaning. Down and down he went, and seemed to be no nearer to the subterranean light. He went on, however, unfalteringly, taking the simple precaution not to look into the depths below, for fear that he might be seized with giddiness and fall.

The air became more and more heavy, the sound of voices more and more distinct; and the purplish reflections, which began to color the circular walls of the shaft, warned him that he was not far from the bottom. He went down a few more steps; and he then could clearly distinguish, at the bottom of the ladder, the entrance to a subterranean chamber, which was lit up with a wavering, reddish light, while his attention was arrested by a conversation that was going forward.

“Kennybol does not come,” said one voice impatiently. “What can be keeping him?” the same voice added, after a moment of silence.

“Impossible to say, master Hacket,” was the response.

“He was to pass the night at his sister’s, Maase Braal’s, at Surb village,” added another voice.

“You can bear me witness,” said the first speaker, “that I keep to my agreement. I was to bring Hans of Iceland as your leader, and I have brought him.”

A murmur, the import of which could not be readily guessed, followed these words. The curiosity with which Ordener had been filled at hearing Kennybol’s name was increased when he heard them speaking of Hans of Iceland.

“My friends, — Jonas, and you, Norbith, — if Kennybol is

late, what does it matter? Our numbers are great enough now to be equal to anything. Did you find the banners at Crag ruins?"

"Yes, master Hacket," several voices responded.

"Well, raise the standard; it is full time. Here is gold; here is your invincible leader. Courage; march to the deliverance of the noble Schumacker, the unfortunate Count of Griffenfeld!"

"Long live Schumacker!" a host of voices repeated, and the name echoed and re-echoed in those subterranean depths.

Ordener listened with continually increasing curiosity and astonishment, scarcely daring to breathe. He could neither believe nor understand what he heard. Schumacker mixed up with Kennybol and Hans of Iceland! What was this dark drama, of which he, as an unknown spectator, was overlooking a disconnected scene? Whom were they seeking to protect? Whose head was in peril?

"Listen," the same voice went on; "I am the friend and confidant of the noble Count of Griffenfeld." The voice was new to Ordener. It went on: "Give me your confidence, as I give you mine. Friends, everything is in your favor; you will reach Drontheim without opposition."

"Master Hacket," a voice interrupted, "let us start. Peters tells me that he saw the whole Munckholm regiment in the mountain passes, marching against us."

"He deceived you," the other responded, in an authoritative tone. "The government is not yet aware of the uprising; and it is so little suspicious of any disturbance that your oppressor and the oppressor of the illustrious Schumacker — I mean General Levin de Knud, who rejected your just petition — has left Drontheim for the capital, to take part in the festivities attending the marriage of his ward, Ordener Guldenlew, with Ulrica Ahlefeld."

The emotions felt by Ordener can be imagined, at hearing the names of people in whom he was interested, and even his own name, spoken by unknown persons, in a mysterious

cavern, in this wild and deserted country. A dreadful doubt sprang to life in his heart. Could it be true? Could this really be Count Griffenfeld's agent who had been speaking? What, Schumacker, that venerable old man, the noble father of his noble Ethel, in revolt against his king and royal master, suborning brigands, and lighting the flames of civil war; and for this hypocrite and rebel, he, Ordener, son of the viceroy of Norway and ward of General Levin, had compromised his future and ventured his life! For him he had hunted down and fought the Iceland brigand, with whom Schumacker seemed to be on confidential terms, since the monster had been put in leadership of the bandits! Who could say, — perhaps even the casket for which he, Ordener, had been on the point of shedding his blood, contained some of the infamous details of the odious plot? Or perhaps the vindictive Munckholm prisoner had been making sport of him! Perhaps he had discovered the name of his would-be defender, and perhaps, — how agonizing was this thought to the magnanimous young man — perhaps he had been encouraged to pursue his hazardous venture because he was the son of an enemy!

Alas, when one has long venerated and loved the name of a victim of misfortune, when in one's secret thoughts one has vowed unswerving fidelity to a being in adversity, it is a bitter moment when one finds one's self met with ingratitude, feels that generosity has been misplaced, and realizes that the sweet and noble happiness of self-devotion has come to nothing! At such a moment one grows old in the saddest of all possible ways — one becomes old in experience, and one loses the most beautiful of all the illusions of life; and in life nothing is beautiful but its illusions.

Such were the desolating thoughts that pressed confusedly upon Ordener's soul. At that ill-fated moment the noble young man would have been glad to die; it seemed to him that all possibilities of happiness had forsaken him. In the assertions of him who claimed to speak as Griffenfeld's envoy

there were, to be sure, some points that seemed mendacious or of doubtful import; but as they had been designed to deceive the ignorant peasantry, Schumacker was only the more culpable, — and Schumacker was Ethel's father!

These agitating thoughts were all the more torturing because they came upon him all at once. He trembled as he clung to the iron bars and continued to listen, for one sometimes dwells with inexplicable impatience and irresistible avidity upon misfortunes which one dreads the most.

"Yes," the envoy's voice went on, "you are under the leadership of the dreaded Hans of Iceland. Who will dare to withstand you? Your cause is that of your women and your children, despoiled undeservedly of their dues; and of a suffering nobleman, who for twenty years has been immured unjustly in an infamous prison. March, then; Schumacker and liberty await you! Death to tyrants!"

"Death!" responded a thousand voices; and in the recesses of the subterranean chamber the clash of arms mingled with the hoarse notes of the mountain horn.

"Stop!" Ordener shouted. He had quickly clambered down to the foot of the ladder, his heart swayed by the imperious desire of saving Schumacker from crime and his country from misfortune. But, as he came to the entrance of the underground chamber, hope gave place to fear that his imprudent interruption might imperil the safety of Ethel's father and perhaps of Ethel herself; so he stood there, with pallid face, casting an astonished glance over the extraordinary spectacle that confronted him.

He looked upon what seemed like a great public square in a subterranean town, that seemed to stretch away indefinitely behind the clustering pillars that upheld the arches. The pillars gleamed like crystal pilasters, in the light of a thousand torches, carried by a multitude of grotesquely armed men, who stood, without any semblance of order, in the place where they had gathered. The multitudinous points of light, and the spectral figures moving about in the darkness, gave

the impression of a fabulous assembly, such as the old chroniclers describe, where sorcerers and demons carry stars to light their way by night among the primeval woods and over crumbling castles.

A great cry went up, "A stranger! Death! Death!" A hundred arms rose threateningly against Ordener, who put his hand to his side in search of his sword. Noble young man, in his generous enthusiasm he had forgotten he was alone and unarmed.

"Wait, wait!" a voice exclaimed, and Ordener recognized it as that of Schumacker's envoy. A short, stout man, dressed in black, with an expression of assumed geniality, came up to Ordener. "Who are you?" he asked.

Ordener did not reply; he was beset on every side, and there was not a spot upon his breast that was not covered by a sword-point or a pistol-muzzle.

"Are you afraid?" the short man inquired, with a smile.

"If your hand were upon my heart, where these sword-points are," the young man said coolly, "you would find that it beats no more quickly than your own,—taking it for granted that you have a heart."

"Oho," said the short man, "he is trying to be haughty! Well, let him die!" And he turned his back.

"Death let it be," Ordener replied; "I wish to owe nothing more to you."

"One instant, master Hacket," said an old man with shaggy beard, leaning on a long musket-barrel. "You are on my premises here, and I alone have the right to despatch this Christian as a messenger to the shades."

"Upon my word, my dear Jonas," said master Hacket, with a laugh, "do as you please. It makes no difference to me whether the spy is tried before you, as long as he is condemned."

"Well," said the old man, looking at Ordener, "tell us who you are, since you have been bold enough to try to find out who we are,"

Ordener kept silence. Surrounded by this strange assembly of Schumacker's partisans, and realizing how ready he had been to give his life for the old prisoner, he felt at this moment nothing but an infinite desire for death.

"His excellency does not deign to reply," said the old man. "When the fox is taken, he makes no sound. Kill him."

"My brave Jonas," Hacket interposed, "let this man's death be the first exploit of Hans of Iceland in your company."

"Yes, yes!" many voices shouted.

The astonished but still intrepid Ordener looked about for Hans of Iceland, with whom he had so valiantly fought on that very morning; and with increased surprise he saw approaching him a man of colossal stature, clad in the garb of a mountaineer. The giant looked at Ordener with dull ferocity, and called for an axe.

"You're not Hans of Iceland," said Ordener sternly.

"Kill him, kill him!" Hacket shouted furiously.

Ordener saw that he must die. He put his hand to his breast to take out the lock of Ethel's hair, and give it one last kiss. As he made this movement, a paper fell from his belt.

"What is that paper?" said Hacket; "Norbith, pick up that paper."

Norbith was a young man, whose swarthy, imperturbable face had an expression of nobility. He picked up the paper and unfolded it.

"Great God," he exclaimed, "it is a passport, signed by my poor friend, Christophorus Nedlam, my unfortunate comrade, who was executed in Skongen market-place a week ago as a counterfeiter."

"Well," said Hacket, in a tone expressive of disappointment, "keep the bit of paper. I thought it more important. Now, my dear Hans of Iceland, do your duty."

"This man is under my protection," said young Norbith, putting himself in front of Ordener. "My head shall fall before a hair of his is touched. I cannot suffer a passport, signed by my friend Christophorus Nedlam, to be violated."

Ordener, finding himself so miraculously protected, bowed his head in humiliation, for he remembered how disdainfully he had received the solicitous blessing extended by the chaplain, Athanasius Munder, —

“May the dying man’s gift be of service to the traveller!”

“Bah,” said Hacket, “you are talking nonsense, my good Norbith! The man is a spy; he must be put to death.”

“Give me my axe,” the giant repeated.

“He shall not die!” cried Norbith. “What would the spirit of poor Nedlam say, he who was so unjustly hanged? I tell you, he must not die, for Nedlam is not willing!”

“Good,” said old Jonas, “Norbith is right. Why do you want the stranger to be killed, master Hacket, when he has Christophorus Nedlam’s pass?”

“But he is a spy, he is a spy!” said Hacket.

The old man took his place by the younger man, in front of Ordener, and both said earnestly, —

“He has a pass from Christophorus Nedlam, who was hanged at Skongen.”

Hacket saw that he must give in; for the rest of the company began to mutter among themselves that the stranger should not be put to death, since he had a passport from Nedlam, the counterfeiter.

“Very well,” he said between his teeth, with repressed fury; “let him live, then. Anyhow, it’s your own affair.”

“If it were the devil himself, I would not have him killed,” said Norbith triumphantly; and saying this, he turned to Ordener, and added: “Listen; you ought to be a worthy comrade, since you have a passport from my good friend, Nedlam. We are loyal miners, and we are in revolt to deliver ourselves from guardianship. Master Hacket, whom you see there, says that we are taking up arms for a certain Count Schumacker, but I know nothing about him. Stranger, our cause is just. Listen, and answer as you would answer your patron saint, — will you be with us?”

"Yes," responded Ordener, as a thought suddenly came into his mind.

"Brother," said the young leader, handing a sword, which the other received in silence, "if you wish to betray us, you will begin by killing me."

At this moment the blast of a horn echoed through the mine, and distant voices shouted, "Here is Kennybol!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

There are thoughts in the head that touch the skies. — *Spanish Romances.*

THE mind sometimes has sudden inspirations, unexpected revelations, that have a sweep beyond the reach of studied reflection, and that penetrate like a flash of lightning to depths which in the radiance of a thousand torches would only seem more obscure.

We shall therefore make no attempt here to analyze the imperious and hidden impulse which induced the noble son of Norway's viceroy to throw in his lot, at young Norbith's proposition, with the bandits who were in revolt in behalf of a state prisoner. It arose, no doubt, partly from a generous desire to get at all hazards to the bottom of this mysterious adventure, and partly from bitter disgust with life and reckless despair of the future. Perhaps an ill-defined doubt of Schumacker's guilt, aroused by the uncertainty of what he had seen and heard, impressed the young man with an instinctive recognition of the truth; and, more than all, one must not forget his love for Ethel. In any case, it was certainly an unconscious perception of the good that might be accomplished by a clear-sighted friend to Schumacker, among these blinded partisans.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Is yonder man the leader? His very glance terrifies me. I should not dare speak to him. — MATURIN: *Bertram*.

WHEN the shouts arose announcing the approach of Kennybol, the famous hunter, Hacket hastened to meet him, leaving Ordener with the two other chiefs.

"Here you are, at last, Kennybol! Come, and let me present you to our noble leader, Hans of Iceland."

Hearing that name, Kennybol, who came up pallid and breathing hurriedly, with dishevelled hair, face covered with sweat, and hands stained with blood, recoiled a step or two.

"Hans of Iceland!"

"Well," said Hackett, "don't be alarmed; he is here in your behalf. Look upon him only as a friend, a companion."

"Hans of Iceland here!" Kennybol repeated, paying no attention to what the other was saying.

"Why, yes," said Hackett, repressing a sardonic smile; "are you going to be afraid of him?"

"What," the hunter interposed for the third time, "you are serious in telling me that Hans of Iceland is here in the mine?"

"Has our good Kennybol gone crazy?" Hackett inquired, turning to the men about him; then, addressing himself directly to Kennybol, he added, "I see that 'twas fear of Hans of Iceland that made you so late."

"By Etheldera, the martyred saint of Norway," said Kennybol, raising his hand toward heaven, "it was not fear of Hans of Iceland, master Hacket, I swear it to you, but Hans of Iceland himself, that prevented me from getting here sooner."

These words were followed by a murmur of astonishment from the group of mountaineers and miners surrounding the two speakers, and they brought to Hacket's brow a frown like that which had appeared a moment before at the appearance and rescue of Ordener.

"What is that you say?" Hacket demanded, dropping his voice.

"I say, master Hacket, that but for your cursed Hans of Iceland, I should have been here before the owls began to cry."

"Really! What did he do to you?"

"Oh, don't ask me; I only hope that my beard may turn as white as an ermine skin in a single day, if ever again while I live, — since I am so fortunate as still to be alive, — if ever again I am caught hunting a white bear."

"What, did you come near being eaten by a bear?"

"A bear," said Kennybol, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders; "a frightful creature, truly! Kennybol eaten by a bear! What do you take me for, master Hacket?"

"Oh, pardon me," said Hacket smilingly.

"If you knew what happened to me, my worthy master," the old hunter interrupted in an undertone, "you would not tell me again that Hans of Iceland is here."

Once more Hacket seemed to be disconcerted for a moment. He caught Kennybol quickly by the arm, as if he feared that his companion might approach nearer to the place where the giant's enormous head could be seen, looming above the men around him.

"My dear Kennybol," said Hacket very earnestly, "tell me, I beg of you, what it was that made you so late. You can understand that at this moment every detail may be of great importance."

"That is true," said Kennybol, after a moment's reflection.

Then, yielding to the reiterated demands of Hacket, he told how that very morning he and his six companions had tracked a white bear to the very verge of Walderhog grotto, without

observing in the ardor of the chase that they were so near the fateful cavern; and how the growling of the bear, as it was held at bay, had summoned a little man, — a monster or demon, — who carried a stone axe, and had rushed upon them in the animal's defence. The appearance of this diabolical creature, who could be none other than Hans, the Iceland demon, had overwhelmed the whole seven with terror. In the sequel, six of his unfortunate comrades had fallen victims to the two monsters, and Kennybol himself had only escaped by a hurried retreat, which had not been cut off, thanks to his own agility, Hans of Iceland's fatigue, and above all to the protection of the ever-blessed patron saint of huntsmen, St. Sylvester.

"You see, master Hacket," he said, still trembling with emotion, and ornamenting his recital with the figures of speech peculiar to the mountains, "you see that if I am late, I'm not to blame for it; and that it is impossible that the Iceland demon, whom I left this morning with his bear ravaging the bodies of my six hapless comrades on Walderhog heath, should now be here, as our friend, in Apsylcorh mine. I am sure that cannot be. I know what that incarnate demon is like now, for I have seen him!"

Hacket, who had listened very attentively, then responded quite seriously, —

"My good friend Kennybol, when you speak of Hans of Iceland or of hell, believe nothing to be impossible. I knew all that you have just told me."

An expression of extreme astonishment and the most artless credulity appeared on the weatherbeaten features of the mountaineer.

"What?" he said.

"Yes," responded Hacket, upon whose face a more discerning observer might perhaps have perceived the manifestation of sarcastic triumph, "yes, I knew everything, except that you were the hero of that tragic adventure. Hans of Iceland told me about it, as we came here together."

"Really?" said Kennybol; and the glance he bestowed on Hacket seemed to indicate both fear and respect.

"Yes, indeed," Hacket went on imperturbably; "but now be reassured; I'm going to take you to the dreaded Hans."

Kennybol uttered a cry of terror. "Be reassured, I tell you," Hacket went on. "Regard him as your leader and your comrade, but take care not to remind him in any way of what took place this morning. You understand?"

He had to give in, but it was not without extreme repugnance that he consented to be taken to the demon. They approached the group where Ordener, Jonas, and Norbith were standing.

"My good Jonas, and you, my dear Norbith, may God guard you!" said Kennybol.

"We have need of it, Kennybol," said Jonas.

At that moment, Kennybol's eye was caught by Ordener's inquiring glance.

"Ah, here you are, young man," he said, going quickly up to him, and putting out his rough and wrinkled hand; "you are welcome! Your bravery, it appears, has met with good success?"

Ordener did not understand in the least what the mountaineer was driving at, and wanted to ask for an explanation, when Norbith exclaimed, —

"So you know this stranger, Kennybol?"

"Yes, by my guardian angel! I love him and esteem him; he is devoted, heart and soul, to the good cause we are striving for."

He cast a second confidential glance at Ordener; and the latter was again about to respond, when Hacket, who had gone in search of the giant, whom the bandits seemed to avoid in fear, approached the four and said, —

"Kennybol, my worthy hunter, here is your leader, the famous Hans of Klipstadur."

Kennybol looked at the gigantic brigand with more surprise than fear, and leaning toward Hacket, said, —

“Master Hacket, the Hans of Iceland I left at Walderhog this morning was a little man.”

“You forget, Kennybol,” Hacket responded in a whisper, — “a demon!”

“Of course,” said the credulous hunter, “he has changed his shape.”

And he turned away, all of a tremble, that he might cross himself unseen.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The mask draws near; 'tis Angelo himself. The rogue understands his part well, — he must be quite sure of his facts. — LESSING.

IN a gloomy wood of ancient oaks, where the pale light of morning scarcely penetrates, a man of small stature approaches another, who is alone, and seems to be waiting for him. The following interview goes forward in an undertone.

“I beg your grace to pardon me for being so late. Various matters have detained me.”

“Such as ?” —

“Kennybol, the mountaineer leader, did not get to the place of meeting till midnight; and we were, moreover, annoyed by the appearance of an unexpected witness.”

“Who was it ?”

“A man who rushed into the mine like a lunatic, in the very midst of our Sanhedrim. I thought at first that he was a spy, and was going to have him put out of the way; but it turned out that he carried a passport from some gallows-bird, greatly respected by the miners, and they took him under their protection. I believe, now that I have thought the matter over, that it was only an inquisitive traveller, after all, or some idiotic pedagogue. At any rate, I have taken measures to keep him harmless.”

“Everything is going on smoothly, then ?”

“Entirely so. The Guldbranshal and Faroë miners, under the lead of young Norbith and old Jonas, and the Kole mountaineers, commanded by Kennybol, ought to be on the march at this moment. They will be joined four miles from Blue Star by their colleagues from Hubfallo and Sund-Moër;

and a few miles farther on the Kongsberg fellows and the Smiasen iron-workers, who, as you know, drove back the Wahlstrom garrison, are now in waiting. These various companies, my dear and honored master, will unite and camp for the night two miles from Skongen, in the Black Column pass."

"But how did they receive your Hans of Iceland?"

"With perfect credulity."

"What would I not give if I had been able to avenge my son's death upon that monster! What a misfortune that he should escape us!"

"My noble lord, use Hans of Iceland's name first to avenge yourself on Schumacker, — later on, you will find some means to punish Hans himself. The insurgents will be on the march all day, and will pass the night in Black Column pass, two miles from Skongen."

"What! You allow so large a force to get so near to Skongen, Musdœmon?"

"Can you doubt my purpose, noble count? Let your grace deign at once to send a messenger to Colonel Vœthaün, whose regiment should now be at Skongen, informing him that the whole insurgent force will be camped to-night, unsuspecting of attack, in the Black Column pass, which is an admirable place for ambuscades."

"I understand; but why, my dear fellow, did you arrange things so as to have the rebels so numerous?"

"The more formidable the insurrection, my lord, the worse will be Schumacker's crime, and the greater your glory. Moreover, it is necessary that the affair be crushed at a single blow."

"Very good; but why is the halting-place so near to Skongen?"

"Because it is the only place in the mountains where defence is impossible. The only ones who will come out of that ravine will be those who are to appear before the tribunals."

"Admirable! Something tells me, Musdœmon, to bring

the affair promptly to an issue. All goes well here, but elsewhere the outlook is disquieting. You know we have had a search made at Copenhagen for the papers that must have come into the possession of Dispolsen ? ”

“ Well, my lord ? ”

“ Well, I learned but a moment ago that the meddlesome fellow had mysterious relations with that cursed astrologer, Cumbysulsun.”

“ The one that died the other day ? ”

“ Yes ; and that the old sorcerer before his death turned over some papers to Schumacker’s agent.”

“ Damnation — there were some letters of mine explaining our plan ! ”

“ Your plan, Musdæmon ! ”

“ A thousand pardons, noble count ! But why did your grace also put yourself at the mercy of Cumbysulsun, that old charlatan and traitor ? ”

“ Listen, Musdæmon ; I am not like you, a creature wholly devoid of faith. ’Tis not without adequate reason, my dear fellow, that I have always put confidence in old Cumbysulsun’s magical knowledge.”

“ Would that your grace had felt doubts of his fidelity proportionate to your confidence in his learning ! However, we need not disturb ourselves, my noble master. Dispolsen is dead, and his papers are lost ; and in a few days more we shall have no further trouble from the people to whom they could be of service.”

“ In any case, what accusation could be brought against me ? ”

“ Or against me, thanks to your grace’s protection ? ”

“ Ah, yes, my dear fellow ; you can of course count upon me. But let us hasten, I beg of you, to the end of this affair. I shall at once send the messenger to the colonel. Come, my attendants are waiting for me behind that thicket ; and we must be on the road to Drontheim, for the Mecklemburger has probably left by now. Well, continue to serve me faithfully, and,

in spite of all the Cumbysulsuns and Dispolsens on earth, you can count on me in life and death."

"I beg your grace to believe — the devil!"

At this they both disappeared in the woods, and the sound of their voices gradually dwindled to silence. Shortly after, nothing could be heard but the tread of two departing horses.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Beat drums, — they come! They have all sworn, and by the same oath, not to return to Castile without the imprisoned count, their lord. They have a stone image of him in a chariot, and have resolved not to turn back till they see the image turn of its own accord; and, in witness that any one who does turn back will be regarded as a traitor, they have all lifted their hands and taken their oath.

So they go on towards Arlançon, as rapidly as the movements of the oxen dragging the chariot will permit, — like the sun, they pause not in their course. Burgos is deserted; only the women and children still remain there. It is the same through the surrounding country. As they go on, they talk together of the horse and the falcon, and ask if they should deliver Castile from the tribute it pays to Leon. And before they enter Navarre, they meet on the frontier . . . — *Spanish Romances*.

WHILE the interview that has just been reported was going on in the forest bordering on Smiasen, the insurgents in three companies left the Apsylcorh lead-mine by the main slope, which opened on a level with the bottom of a deep ravine.

Ordener, in spite of his desire to go with Kennybol, had been placed in Norbith's company. He could see at first only a long procession of torches, the light of which, dulled a little by the approach of dawn, was reflected from axes, pitchforks, mallets, iron-pointed clubs, great hammers, pickaxes, crowbars, and all the rude weapons that the insurgents had brought from their occupations; and mingled with them were other less unconventional weapons, proving the existence of a conspiracy, — muskets, pikes, swords, carbines, and arquebuses. When the sun appeared, and the light of the torches gave place to smoke, he could see more clearly the organization of this extraordinary army, which went onward in disorder, with coarse songs and savage outcries, like a troop of Spanish wolves headed for carrion.

It was made up of three divisions, or rather of three crowds. First came the Kole mountaineers, led by Kennybol, and clad like him in the skins of wild beasts, resembling him also in their wild, ferocious bearing. Then came the young miners, led by Norbith, and the older ones under the command of Jonas, with their big felt hats, their baggy trousers, their naked arms, and their blackened faces, staring at the sun with heavy eyes. Above the tumultuous assembly fluttered flame-colored banners, bearing different inscriptions, such as, "Long live Schumacker!" "Deliver the Liberator!" "Liberty for the Miners!" "Liberty for the Count of Griffenfeld!" "Death to Guldenlew!" "Death to the Oppressors!" "Death to Ahlefeld!" The rebels seemed to consider these banners to be more of a burden than an ornament; and they passed them from hand to hand, as the standard-bearers became weary, or wished to enliven the songs and vociferations of their comrades with discordant blasts from their horns.

The rear guard of this extraordinary army was made up of ten carts, drawn by reindeer and mules, intended, no doubt, for the conveyance of supplies; while the vanguard consisted of the giant who had been brought by Hacket, and who walked on alone, armed with a club and an axe. Behind him, at a considerable distance, the foremost ranks of Kennybol's company followed, the men keeping their eyes upon their diabolical leader, in order that they might not lose sight of the various transformations that he might be pleased to undergo.

The stream of rebels descended the mountains of northern Drontheimhus in noisy confusion, arousing the echoes in the pine woods with blasts from their horns. The throng was soon increased by re-enforcements from Sund-Moër, Hubfallo, Kongsberg, and by the troops of Smiasen iron-workers, who were in curious contrast with the rest of the insurgents. They were tall, muscular men, armed with tongs and hammers, wearing great leather aprons for cuirasses, and

having for their only ensign a tall wooden cross. They marched in all seriousness, keeping step with a regularity that was more religious than military, and their only war songs were biblical psalms and hymns. Their only leader was the cross-bearer, who went before them, unarmed.

The mob of insurgents did not meet with a single human being in their progress. As they drew near, the goatherd drove his flock into a cavern, and the peasant deserted his hut; for the dweller in the plains and valleys has one supreme terror, — he fears the bandit's horn and the archer's trumpet.

Thus they made their way across the hills and through the forests, passing now and then a clearing; following winding roads, where they saw more wild beasts' tracks than signs of human footsteps; making their way around lagoons; and crossing torrents, ravines, and marshes. All these places were strange to Ordener; once only, as his uplifted eyes encountered what looked like a distant, purplish, rounded peak on the horizon, he leaned toward one of his rude travelling companions and inquired, —

“Friend, what is that elevation, down there in the south, at the right?”

“’Tis the Vulture's Neck on Oëlmœ cliff,” was the response.

Ordener uttered a profound sigh.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

My daughter, may God guard and bless you! — RÉGNIER.

MONKEY, parrots, combs, and ribbons were all in readiness in the Countess of Ahlefeld's apartments for the reception of Lieutenant Frederic. The mother had at great expense obtained a copy of the famous Scudéry's latest romance. By her order, it had been richly rebound with clasps of silver fretwork; and it was placed among perfumery bottles and cosmetic boxes, on an elegant toilet-stand with gilded feet and inlaid top, with which she had furnished the boudoir intended for her dear child Frederic. When she had given her minute attention to the little maternal cares that had served for a moment to distract her feeling of hatred, she remembered that the only task now awaiting her was the ruin of Schumacker and Ethel. General Levin's departure had left them wholly in her power.

A great many things had taken place recently in Munckholm donjon, concerning which she had very vague ideas. Who was the serf, vassal, or servant, who, according to the extremely ambiguous and confused representations of her son, had made love to the ex-chancellor's daughter? What were Baron Ordener's relations with the Munckholm prisoners? What were the reasons for Ordener's extraordinary absence, at the moment when the two kingdoms were occupied with his approaching marriage to Ulrica Ahlefeld, whom he seemed to disdain? Lastly, what had taken place between Levin de Knud and Schumacker? The countess found herself in a maze of conjecture. In order to clear up these mysterious problems, she finally resolved upon a visit to Munckholm, inspired alike by feminine curiosity and motives of enmity.

One afternoon, as Ethel was alone in the donjon garden, engaged in the oft-repeated task of inscribing certain mysterious characters with the diamond in her ring on the black pillar of the postern gate through which Ordener had disappeared, the gate itself opened. The young girl trembled; this was the first time that the postern had been opened since it had closed upon him. A tall, pale woman, dressed in white, stood before her. She greeted Ethel with a smile as sweet as poisoned honey; and in her tranquil and complacent glance there was a mingling of hatred, spite, and involuntary admiration. Ethel looked at her with astonishment and almost with fear. Since her old nurse had died in her arms, this was the first woman she had seen within the gloomy precincts of Munckholm.

"My child," said the stranger softly, "you are the daughter of the Munckholm prisoner?"

Ethel involuntarily turned away. She had a feeling of repulsion as her visitor confronted her, and it seemed to her that there was venom in the breath that accompanied that soft voice.

"My name is Ethel Schumacker," she responded. "My father says that when I was in my cradle I was made Countess of Tongsberg and Princess of Wollin."

"Your father told you that!" the tall woman exclaimed, in a tone which she quickly repressed; and then she added, "you have endured many misfortunes."

"Misfortune received me in its iron arms when I was born," the young captive responded; "my noble father says that it will never leave me till I am dead."

A smile passed over the stranger's lips, although it was a pitying tone in which the next question was asked.

"And you do not complain of those who have caged you for life in this dungeon? You do not curse the authors of your misfortune?"

"No, for fear that our malediction bring upon them sufferings as great as they have put upon us."

"Do you know the authors of the evils you deplore?" said the woman in white, with impassive face.

"'Tis all by the will of Heaven," said Ethel, after a moment's reflection.

"Does your father never speak of the king?"

"The king? I pray for him night and morning, although I never saw him."

Ethel could not understand why the stranger bit her lips at this response.

"Does your unfortunate father never speak in anger of his implacable enemies, General Arensdorf, Bishop Spollyson, and Chancellor Ahlefeld?"

"I do not know those names."

"And did you never hear of Levin de Knud?"

Remembrance of the scene that had taken place on the eve of the preceding day, between the governor of Drontheim and Schumacker, was too fresh in Ethel's mind not to be revived at Levin's name.

"Levin de Knud?" she said; "it seems to me that is the man for whom my father has so much esteem and even affection."

"What!" exclaimed the tall woman.

"Yes," the young girl went on; "it was Levin de Knud whom my lord and father defended so energetically, day before yesterday, against the governor of Drontheim."

"Against the governor of Drontheim!" said the other, with increased surprise. "My child, be serious, I beg of you; your own interests have brought me here. Your father took General Levin de Knud's part against the governor of Drontheim?"

"General? If I remember rightly, it was captain — but, no; you are right. My father seemed to have as much affection for General Levin de Knud as he had hatred for the governor of Drontheimhus."

"This is all very mysterious," said the tall, pale woman to herself, her curiosity now fairly in a blaze. "My dear child,

what was it that took place between your father and the governor of Drontheim ? ”

This questioning was beginning to be wearisome to poor Ethel, who looked earnestly at the tall woman.

“ Am I a criminal, to be interrogated in this way ? ”

The simple inquiry seemed to disconcert the visitor, as if she realized that the object of her diplomacy was about to escape her. She went on, however, in a voice slightly touched with emotion, —

“ You would not speak to me in that way if you knew why and in whose behalf I come.”

“ What,” said Ethel, “ do you come from him ? Have you a message from him ? ”

A deep blush suffused her beautiful face ; and her heart leaped into her throat, swollen with impatience and anxiety.

“ From whom ? ” the other asked.

The young girl checked herself, with the name of the adored one on her lips. She saw in the stranger’s eye a flash of sombre joy, that seemed like a ray from the nethermost pit.

“ You do not know of whom I am speaking,” she said sadly.

An expression of thwarted expectation appeared for the second time upon the stranger’s dissembling face.

“ My poor girl ! ” she exclaimed ; “ what can I do for you ? ”

Ethel did not hear. Her thoughts were far away on the northern mountains, in pursuit of the adventurous traveller. Her head hung upon her breast, and her hands were clasped convulsively.

“ Does your father expect to get out of this prison ? ”

This question, twice repeated, brought Ethel to herself.

“ Yes,” she said ; and a large tear rolled down her cheek.

“ He does, you say,” said the stranger, brightening up at Ethel’s response ; “ and how ? By what means ? When ? ”

“ He expects to be released from prison when he is released from life.”

The very simplicity of the young and unsophisticated heart

sometimes has a power which all the devices of experienced wickedness are unable to cope with. The tall woman seemed to realize this fact; for the expression of her face suddenly changed, and she put a cold hand on Ethel's arm.

"Listen to me," she said, in a tone that was almost sincere; "have you heard that your father's life is again threatened by a judicial inquiry, — that he is suspected of having stirred up a revolt among the northern miners?"

The words "revolt" and "judicial inquiry" were without definite meaning to Ethel; she lifted her great black eyes to the stranger's face, and asked, —

"What do you mean?"

"That your father is a conspirator against the state, that his crime is on the point of discovery, and that the penalty is death."

"Death? Crime?" the poor child exclaimed.

"Crime and death," said the strange woman solemnly.

"My father! My noble father!" Ethel went on. "Alas, that he who has passed his days in hearing me read the Edda and the Gospels should be looked upon as a conspirator! What can he have done to you?"

"Don't look at me in that way; I tell you, once more, that I am far from being your enemy. Your father is suspected of a great crime; I give you warning. Perhaps, instead of with expressions of hatred, my mission ought to be received with thankfulness."

"Oh, pardon me, my noble lady, pardon me!" said Ethel, touched by this reproach. "Until now what human being have we seen who was not an enemy? I was suspicious of you; you will forgive me, will you not?"

"What, my daughter," said the stranger, with a smile, "is this the first time that you have found any friend?"

A vivid blush swept over Ethel's cheek. She hesitated a moment.

"Yes; God knows the truth. We have found a friend, noble lady, — one only!"

"One only," the tall woman exclaimed quickly. "Tell me his name, I beg of you; you don't know how important it is. Your father's safety depends upon it. Who is the friend?"

"I don't know," said Ethel.

"Is it because I wish to be of service to you, that you jest with me?" said the stranger, turning pale. "Remember that your father's life is at stake. Who is the friend of whom you have spoken; tell me?"

"Heaven knows, noble lady, that all I know about him is his name, which is Ordener."

Ethel uttered these words with the hesitation that one naturally feels in speaking a cherished name before a person who may receive it indifferently.

"Ordener! Ordener!" the unknown repeated, greatly moved, as she clutched fiercely at her white embroidered veil; "and what is his father's name?" she asked, in an agitated voice.

"I don't know," the young girl responded. "What matter to me his family and his father? He is Ordener only, and the most generous of men."

Alas, the tone in which these words were uttered revealed the secret of Ethel's heart to the stranger's scrutiny. The visitor assumed an air of tranquillity and composure, and put this question to the young girl, looking at her closely, —

"Have you heard anything about the approaching marriage of the viceroy's son with the daughter of the present grand chancellor, Ahlefeld?"

The question had to be repeated, to bring back Ethel's attention to a subject in which she did not seem to be interested.

"I believe I have," was her only response. Her tranquillity and air of indifference seemed to surprise the stranger.

"Well, what do you think of the marriage?"

It was impossible to perceive the least change of expression in Ethel's great eyes, as she responded, "To tell the truth, nothing, except to hope that it may be a happy union."

"Counts Guldenlew and Ahlefeld, the fathers of the affianced, are your father's bitterest enemies."

"May their children's union be a happy one!" repeated Ethel softly.

"I have an idea," the astute stranger went on. "If your father's life is in peril, you can take advantage of the marriage to obtain the intervention of the viceroy's son."

"The saints reward you for all your kindness to us, noble lady; but how am I to present this petition to the viceroy's son?"

This speech was made with such evident good faith that the stranger made a gesture of astonishment.

"What! Do you not know him?"

"That powerful nobleman!" cried Ethel; "you forget that I do not know anybody outside the limits of this fortress."

"There it is," the tall woman muttered to herself; "what did that old fool of a Levin tell me? She does not know him;" then, raising her voice, she added, "not know him? Impossible! You must have seen the viceroy's son, for he has been here."

"It may be so, noble lady, but of all the men that come here, I have seen only one,—my Ordener."

"Your Ordener!" the unknown interrupted. She went on, without seeming to observe Ethel's blushes. "Do you know a young man of noble countenance, graceful figure, serious and intrepid bearing? His glance is gentle yet austere, he has a complexion like a young girl, and his hair is chestnut."

"Oh," cried poor Ethel, "'tis he, 'tis my betrothed, my adored Ordener! Tell me, dear and noble lady, do you bring me news of him? Where did you meet him? He told you, did he not, that he deigned to love me? He told you that he had my whole heart. Alas, love is all that an unfortunate prisoner has in the world! That noble friend! 'Twas less than a week ago,—I can see him still, standing in his green cloak, beneath which beat so gentle a heart, and with the black plume waving so gracefully over his handsome forehead."

She paused, for she saw the tall woman start, and turn alternately red and pale, and heard her scream aloud, —

“Wretch, you are in love with Ordener Guldenlew, Ulrica Ahlefeld’s affianced, and the son of your father’s mortal enemy, the viceroy of Norway !”

Ethel fell, swooning.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Caupolican. Move so softly that the earth itself shall not hear the sound of your footsteps. Be on the alert, my friends. If we can get there without being overheard, the victory is yours.

Tucapel. Thick night has fallen, and the earth is shrouded in dread obscurity. We have heard no sentinel; we have seen no spy.

Ringo. Forward!

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Tucapel. What do I hear? Are we discovered?

LOPE DE VEGA: *Araucue Subdued.*

“WELL, Guldon Stayper, my old comrade, do you know that the night breeze begins to beat the hair on my cap about my face quite lustily?”

This was said by Kennybol, who had taken his glance for a moment from the giant leading the insurgents, and had turned to one of the mountaineers that chance had brought beside him. The one who was spoken to bent his head, transferred the standard he was carrying from one shoulder to the other, and said, with a groan of weariness, —

“Hum! I think, captain, that with the wind sweeping through the cursed Black Column pass, we shall not be quite as warm to-night as a fire dancing on the hearth.”

“We’ll make such good fires that the old owls will be routed from their ruined palaces on the cliff-tops. I don’t like owls. That horrible night when I saw the fairy Ubfen, she took the form of an owl.”

“By St. Sylvester!” Guldon Stayper interrupted, turning his head, “the wind angel is fanning us briskly! To my way of thinking, Captain Kennybol, we had best set fire to the mountain firs. ’Twould be a fine thing to see an army warming itself with a forest.”

“Heaven forbid, my dear Guldon! Think of the roebucks

and the gerfalcons and the pheasants! Cook game as much as you like, but don't burn it."

"Captain," said old Guldon, with a laugh, "you are always the same old Kennybol, — a wolf to roebucks, a bear to wolves, and a buffalo to bears."

"Are we far from Black Column?" one of the huntsmen inquired.

"Comrade," Kennybol responded, "we shall enter the pass at nightfall; we shall be at the Four Crosses in a moment."

A brief silence followed, in which nothing was heard but the tread of many feet, the whistling of the wind, and the distant chanting of the Smiasen iron-workers.

"My good Guldon Stayper," Kennybol went on, after whistling the air of *Rollo the Huntsman*, "you were at Drontheim for a few days recently?"

"Yes, captain; my brother, George Stayper, the fisherman, was ill; and I went to take his place in the boat for a while, so that his poor family might not die of hunger."

"And while you were at Drontheim, did you chance to see the prisoner, Count Schumacker, or Gleffenhen, or whatever his name may be? You know, — the man in whose name we are revolting against the royal guardianship, and whose coat of arms has doubtless been embroidered on that big red banner you carry?"

"It's heavy enough," said Guldon. "You asked about the prisoner at Munckholm fortress, — count what's his name? How do you suppose, my worthy captain, that I could see him? I should have needed," he added, lowering his voice, "the eyes of that demon who marches in front of us, — and yet he doesn't seem to leave any odor of sulphur behind him, — eyes like Hans of Iceland, who can see through walls; or a ring like Queen Mab's, to take me through keyholes. There is only one with us, I am sure, who has ever seen the count, the prisoner that you speak of."

"Only one! Ah, yes; master Hacket? But Hacket is not with us. He left us at nightfall, to return."

"I'm not speaking of master Hacket, captain."

"Who, then?"

"The young man with the green cloak and black plume, who fell in on us last night."

"Well?"

"Well," said Guldon, drawing near to Kennybol; "that's the one that knows the count, the famous count, just as well as I know you, Captain Kennybol."

Kennybol looked at Guldon, winked with his left eye, snapped his teeth together, and struck his comrade on the shoulder, with an exclamation of pride in his own powers of penetration.

"I thought as much!"

"Yes, captain," Guldon Stayper went on, throwing the standard to the other shoulder; "I warrant you, the young man in green has seen the count, — I don't know his name, but the one we are going to fight for, — saw him right in Munckholm donjon, and seemed to think no more of going into that prison than you or I would of walking into a royal park."

"And how do you know all this, my worthy Guldon?"

The old mountaineer seized Kennybol by the arm, and then opening his otter-skin jacket with the utmost precaution, said, "Look!"

"By my patron saint," exclaimed Kennybol, "it shines like a diamond!" The exclamation was not without cause, for Guldon Stayper's rough belt was fastened with a magnificent diamond buckle.

"That's a diamond," retorted the standard-bearer, closing his jacket, "just as sure as the moon is two days' march from the earth, or as my belt is made of buffalo hide."

But an expression of astonishment and anger darkened the face of Kennybol. He bent his eyes to the ground, saying with a sort of savage solemnity, —

"Guldon Stayper, of Cholsœ village in the Kole mountains, Medprath Stayper, your father, died at one hundred and two, with no stain upon his name, — for 'tis no crime to kill a stag

or elk in the king's forest. Guldon Stayper, fifty-seven good years have passed over your gray head, and nothing but an owl can be called young at that age. Guldon Stayper, my comrade, I would rather know that the diamonds in that buckle were millet seeds, than that you did not come justly by it, — as justly as the royal pheasant comes by a musket-ball."

The mountaineer leader delivered this strange admonition in a tone expressive of warning and indulgence.

"As truly as our Captain Kennybol is the hardiest hunter in Kole," Guldon responded imperturbably, "as truly as diamonds are diamonds, these are by right my own property."

"So?" responded Kennybol, in a tone half way between belief and doubt.

"God and my blessed patron saint know," responded Guldon, "that it was one night when I was pointing out Drontheim Spladgest to certain good Norwegians who were carrying the body of an officer who had been found on Urchtal sands. It was about a week ago. A young man came up to my boat. 'To Munckholm!' he said. I cared but little for the task, captain; 'twas too much like a bird, flying about a cage. However, the young lordling was haughty and proud in bearing, he was followed by a servant leading two horses, and he sprang into my boat with an air of authority. I took up my oars, — that is to say, my brother's oars. My guardian angel willed it so; for when we arrived, my young passenger, after parleying with the sergeant who was in command at the fort, threw me by way of payment — this is true, captain, as God hears me — the diamond buckle that I just showed you, and that would have fallen to my brother George, and not to me, if at the hour when the heaven-sent traveller came I had not finished with my service as George's substitute. There you have the truth, Captain Kennybol."

"Good."

The face of the leader gradually assumed as serene an expression as its natural melancholy and sternness would permit of, and in a softened voice he asked of Guldon, —

“And are you sure, old comrade, that the young man you speak of is the same as the one now behind us, with Norbith’s company?”

“Sure. I could not forget, among a thousand, the face of one who has made my fortune; more than that, ’tis the same cloak, the same black plume.”

“I believe you, Guldón.”

“And it is clear that he was going to see the famous prisoner, for if there had not been some great mystery he would not have been so liberal with the boatman who took him there; and then, you must remember that he is now with us.”

“You are right.”

“And I shouldn’t wonder, captain, if the young stranger were somewhat higher in the count’s esteem than master Hacket, who, it seems to me, is really no good, except to snarl like a wild cat.”

“Comrade, you have said just what I was going to say,” Kennybol responded, with an expressive nod. “Throughout this whole affair I shall be much more desirous of obeying the young lord, than Hacket, the envoy. May St. Sylvester and St. Olaüs guard me; for I believe, comrade Guldón, that, if the Iceland demon is in command, we owe it much less to that boastful crow, Hacket, than to the young stranger!”

“Is that so, captain?” Guldón asked.

Kennybol opened his mouth to reply, when a hand fell on his shoulder. It was Norbith.

“Kennybol, we are betrayed! Gormon Woëstroëm has just come from the south. The whole arquebusier regiment is marching against us. The Schleswig uhlands are at Sparbo, and three companies of Danish dragoons are waiting for horses at Lœvig. All along the road he saw green coats as thick as bushes. Let us hurry and get to Skongen, and let us not make any halt on the way. There we shall at least be able to defend ourselves. In addition to what I’ve told you, Gormon thinks he saw muskets gleaming through the undergrowth, as he came through Black Column pass.”

The young leader was pale and agitated, but the glance of his eye and the tone of his voice expressed courage and determination.

“Impossible !” exclaimed Kennybol.

“Absolutely certain !” said Norbith.

“But master Hacket” —

“Is a traitor or a coward. You may be sure of what I tell you, comrade Kennybol. Where is Hacket ?”

At that moment old Jonas came up to the two leaders. From the profound discouragement expressed in his face, it was easy to see that he had heard the ominous tidings. The two old men, Jonas and Kennybol, looked at one another and began to shake their heads in concert.

“Well, Jonas ? Well, Kennybol ?” said Norbith.

Meanwhile the aged chieftain of the Faroë miners had passed his hand slowly over his wrinkled brow, and responded in an undertone to the inquiring glance of the mountaineer leader, —

“Yes, it is too true, — it is too certain. Gormon Woëstroëm saw them.”

“If it is true,” said Kennybol, “what shall we do ?”

“What shall we do ?” responded Jonas.

“In my opinion, comrade Jonas, we should be wise to make a halt.”

“And wiser still, brother Kennybol, to beat a retreat.”

“Make a halt, beat a retreat !” exclaimed Norbith. “We must go forward !”

The two old men turned to the younger man with an expression of surprise and disapproval.

“Go forward !” said Kennybol ; “and the Munckholm arquebusiers !”

“And the Schleswig uhlans !” added Jonas.

“And the Danish dragoons !” said Kennybol.

“And the royal guardianship,” said Norbith, stamping on the ground ; “and my mother, dying of hunger and cold !”

"By the demons, yes, — the royal guardianship!" said Jonas the miner, with an ill-concealed shudder.

"What of it?" said Kennybol, the mountaineer.

"My worthy comrade and valorous huntsman," said Jonas, taking Kennybol by the hand, "you have not the honor of being under the guardianship of our glorious sovereign, Christiern IV. May holy King Olaüs, in heaven, deliver us from that guardianship!"

"Ask that boon of your sword," said Norbith ferociously.

"Strong words come easy from a young man, comrade Norbith," responded Kennybol; "but bear in mind that if we go farther, those green coats" —

"I also bear in mind that it will be no good to us to retreat to the mountains, like foxes before wolves, since they know our names and our part in the revolt. Death for death, I prefer a musket-ball to a gallows-rope."

"The devil," said Jonas, nodding his head, in token of approval, "guardianship for our brothers, and the gallows for us! Norbith may very well be right."

"Give me your hand, my brave Norbith," said Kennybol; "there is danger either way. Better march straight to the precipice, than fall into the abyss in a retreat."

"Forward, then, forward!" cried old Jonas, slapping the pommel of his sword.

"Brothers, listen!" said Norbith, taking each by the hand. "Be rash, like me; I will be prudent, like you. We will make no halt to-day till we get to Skongen; the garrison is weak, and we can quickly dispose of it. Let us go, since we must, through Black Column pass, but in perfect silence. We must get through, even if the enemy is in force there."

"I believe that the arquebusiers have not yet reached Ordal's bridge, before Skongen; but no matter, — silence!"

"Silence let it be," repeated Kennybol.

"Now, Jonas," Norbith went on, "let us return to our posts. To-morrow, perhaps, we shall be at Drontheim, in

spite of the arquebusiers, the uhlands, the dragoons, and all the green coats in the south country."

The three chieftains separated. Soon the word "silence" passed from rank to rank; and the rebel band, which a moment before had been making the heavens ring, went on through the wilds, amid the gloom of nightfall, like a procession of mute phantoms, passing noiselessly over the winding footpaths of a graveyard.

Meanwhile, the road that they followed was getting narrower and narrower, and led by degrees to a rocky ravine, the sides of which became more and more steep. At the moment when the reddish moon rose behind a cold mass of clouds, which assumed the most grotesque shapes in their fantastic mobility, Kennybol leaned toward Guldon Stayper, —

"We are just entering Black Column pass. Silence!"

Already they could hear the noise of the torrent, which follows the winding of the road between the two mountains, and to the south they could see the enormous oblong granite pyramid, called the Black Column, standing out against the sky and the snow-covered slopes of the surrounding peaks; while to the west the misty horizon was bounded by the further reaches of Sparbo forest, and a long rocky amphitheatre, terraced like a giant's staircase.

The insurgents went on, constrained by the narrowness of the way to lengthen out their line of march. They entered deep gorges, showing no light and uttering not a sound. Even the noise of their footsteps could not be heard amid the thunder of the waterfalls and the roar of the mighty winds, which set the great trees waving and made the clouds dance around the icy mountain summits. As they moved through the gloomy depths of the pass, the moonlight did not even touch the points of their lances, and the white eagles, flying at intervals over their heads, had no idea that such a human swarm was trespassing on their domains. Once old Guldon Stayper touched Kennybol's shoulder, with the butt of his carbine.

"Captain, captain! I see something shining behind that thicket of holly and broom!"

"I see it too," the mountaineer leader responded; "'tis the reflection of the clouds in the torrent."

They moved on, until Guldon again suddenly seized the leader by the arm.

"Look," he said; "are not those muskets, gleaming up there in the shadow of the rocks?"

"Don't be uneasy, brother Guldon," said Kennybol, after a momentary scrutiny, shaking his head. "'Tis the moonlight, falling on a piece of ice."

No further cause for alarm manifested itself; and the different companies went tranquilly onward through the winding pass, gradually forgetting that their position involved the slightest degree of danger. After two hours of wearisome progress over the tree-trunks and rocks with which the road was obstructed, the advance guard entered the grove of fir-trees covering the steep slopes at the end of Black Column pass, and above which rise black moss-covered cliffs.

Guldon Stayper went up to Kennybol, declaring his thankfulness that they were getting out of the ill-omened ravine, and adding that he was going to render homage to St. Sylvester for their fortunate escape from Black Column pass. Kennybol began to laugh, swearing that he had never felt any such old woman's fears, so true it is that, with most men, when danger is past, 'tis the same as if it had never existed; and then they seek, by displaying their incredulity, to demonstrate the courage which perhaps they have not made manifest before.

At that moment two little points of light, like burning coals, floating through the darkness of the undergrowth, attracted his attention.

"By my soul's salvation," he whispered, seizing Guldon's arm, "there, certainly, are two fiery eyes, that must belong to the finest lynx that ever snarled in the brushwood."

"You are right," responded old Stayper; "and if he were

not marching in front of us, I should be willing to believe that such cursed eyes as those could belong to no one but the Ice" —

"Hush!" said Kennybol, as he grasped his carbine. "It shall not be said that so fine a bit of game as that escaped with impunity from Kennybol."

The shot was made before Guldon Stayper could check the imprudent hunter, although he seized him by the arm. The report was followed, not by the plaintive wail of a wildcat, but by a frightful tiger growl, and by an outburst of even more horrible human laughter.

No one heard the resounding echo as the musket-shot died away in the mountain spaces; for the flash from the carbine had scarcely lit up the darkness, or the report broken the all-pervading silence, when from a thousand throats the cry of "Long live the king!" went up from the surrounding rocks and forest, like a great clap of thunder, sweeping over the heads of the insurgents from either side, from before and from behind them; while a murderous volley of musketry smote them in the face, stunning and blinding them at the same time, and revealing, amid clouds of reddish smoke, a battalion behind every rock, and a soldier behind every tree.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

To arms, captains, — to arms! — *The Captive of Ochali.*

WE shall now ask the reader to be kind enough to go back with us to the beginning of the day that has just passed, and imagine himself at Skongen, where the arquebusier regiment, which we saw on its march in the thirtieth chapter of this veracious chronicle, had taken up its quarters, just as the insurgents were emerging from the Apsylcorh lead-mine.

After having given his orders with regard to quarters for his men, Baron Voëthaün, colonel of arquebusiers, was crossing the threshold of the tavern, near the town gate, when he felt a heavy hand resting in a familiar way upon his shoulder. He turned around.

The man who stood before him was very short, and a big straw hat so concealed his face as to leave nothing visible there but a bristling red beard. He was closely wrapped up in the folds of a gray woollen cloak, to which was still attached the ragged remnants of a hood, indicating that it had once been some sort of a priestly garment. The man's hands were concealed in large gloves.

"Well, my man," said the colonel brusquely; "what the devil do you want with me?"

"Colonel," responded the little man, with a curious expression, "come with me a moment; I have something to give you."

At this strange invitation the baron stood still, surprised and speechless.

"Important information," said the man with the big gloves. Such insistency had its effect on Baron Voëthaün. In view

of the critical condition of affairs in the province, and the importance of the mission with which he was intrusted, no means of information was to be disdained.

"Go on," he said.

The little man led the way, until they were outside the town, — then he stopped.

"Colonel, would you like to exterminate the rebels at one blow?"

"Well, that wouldn't be a bad way to begin the campaign," said the colonel, laughing.

"In that case, put all your men in ambush to-day, in Black Column pass, two miles from here. The insurgents will camp there to-night. When you see the blaze of the camp-fire, let your troops fall on. The victory will be an easy one."

"My good fellow, the advice is good, and I thank you for it; but how came you to know what you have just told me?"

"If you knew me, colonel, you would be more likely to ask me how such a thing could take place, and I not know it."

"Yes, but who are you?"

"I didn't come here to tell you that," said the little man, stamping on the ground.

"You needn't be alarmed. Whoever you may be, the service that you render will be your passport. Perhaps you were one of the rebels?"

"I refused to join with them."

"Then, why do you conceal your name, if you are a faithful subject to the king?"

"What is it to you?"

The colonel wanted to get further information from this extraordinary counsellor.

"Tell me, is it true that the brigands are under the leadership of the famous Hans of Iceland?"

"Hans of Iceland!" the little man repeated, with a peculiar vocal inflection.

The baron repeated his question; but an outburst of laughter, that was like a wild beast's roar, was the only response

that he could obtain. He asked a number of other questions, about the numbers of the miners and their leaders; the little man would tell him nothing.

“Colonel, I have told you all that I have to tell you. Put your regiment in ambush to-day, in Black Pillar pass, and you can wipe out the whole mob.”

“Since you will not tell me who you are, you deprive yourself of receiving the king’s gratitude; but none the less it is no more than right that Baron Voethaün should offer some evidence of thanks for the service you render him.” The colonel threw his purse at the little man’s feet.

“Keep your gold, colonel,” said the other. “I have no need of it; and,” he added, pointing to a large bag fastened to his belt with a cord, “if you needed a guerdon for killing those men, I myself have gold to give you in return for their blood.”

Before the colonel had recovered from the astonishment into which he had been thrown by these inexplicable words, his mysterious visitor had disappeared.

Baron Voethaün went slowly back, asking himself how much faith he could put in what had been told him. Just as he was entering the tavern, he was handed a letter, sealed with the grand chancellor’s crest. It was a message from the Count of Ahlefeld, containing, to the great astonishment of the colonel, the same information and the same advice which he had just received at the town gate from the incomprehensible creature in the straw hat and big gloves.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

. . . A hundred banners were bent forwards over the heads of the valiant, and blood flowed round like water, and death was held better than flight. A Saxon bard had called it a feast of the swords—a gathering of the eagles to the prey—the clashing of bills upon shield and helmet—the shouting of battle, more joyful than the clamor of a bridal. —WALTER SCOTT : *Ivanhoe*.

No attempt will be made here to describe the horrible confusion which overwhelmed the disorderly rebel columns, when the fatal volley suddenly showed them the thickly guarded slopes, and every hollow peopled with unexpected enemies. It would have been difficult to say whether the prolonged chorus of shouts that went up from the thunderstruck ranks was a cry of despair, of fear, or of fury. The terrible fire, trained upon them from every side by the ambushed royal troops, grew more intense from moment to moment; and before a second musket-shot on their side had followed up Kennybol's ill-omened effort, they were surrounded by a stifling cloud of glowing smoke, through which death leaped blindly; and each of them, in his isolation, could recognize none of his fellows, and could but barely distinguish in the distance the arquebusers, dragoons, and uhlans, who showed themselves confusedly among the rocks and undergrowth, like devils in a furnace.

The different companies, stretching out over a distance of about a mile along a narrow and winding road, bordered on one side by a raging torrent, and on the other by a wall of rock, that prevented them from making a quick retreat, were like a serpent cut through as it straightens out its length, while the living segments, writhing in foam, go on for a long time, trying to unite.

When the first shock of surprise was over, the men in their natural savage intrepidity seemed to be animated by a mutual feeling of despair. Furious at their defenceless condition, the swarm of brigands set up a frightful shout, that drowned for a moment the noise made by their triumphant enemies; and when the latter saw their leaderless, disorganized, and practically disarmed victims climbing up the steep slopes, under a terrible fire, clinging tooth and nail to the vines, and waving hammers and pitchforks — then the soldiers, well-armed, under perfect discipline, and securely posted as they were, and who had not yet lost one of their number, could not repress an involuntary shudder of terror.

Often and often some of the frantic rabble succeeded in reaching the heights occupied by their assailants, climbing over dead bodies, leaping upon the shoulders of their comrades, and swinging from rock to rock like living ladders; but they scarcely had time to shout, “Liberty,” to lift their axes or their massive clubs, or to show their blackened faces foaming with convulsive rage, when they were hurled back into the abyss, striking against their adventurous companions in their fall, and carrying the whole attacking force down with them.

The efforts made by the unfortunate creatures to fly or to defend themselves were all in vain. Every exit from the pass was closed, and every accessible point swarmed with soldiers. The greater number of the ill-fated rebels died in the road, after breaking their twibills and cutlasses against the rocks. Some, folding their arms, and with eyes fixed on the ground, seated themselves on stones along the side of the way, and waited in silence and stolidity for the musket-balls that knocked them over into the torrent. Those who, through Hacket’s foresight, had been armed with worn-out arquebuses, directed a few useless and haphazard shots toward the summit of the cliffs, or the openings from whence emerged a ceaseless rain of bullets. The intermittent and persistent volleys of musketry were accompanied by a tumultuous uproar, in which the furious outcry of the bandit leaders,

and the cool commands of the officers, could be clearly distinguished; and meanwhile a reddish vapor steamed up from the place of carnage, throwing a pulsating light over the mountain slopes and the foaming torrent, which swept onward like a pitiless engine of death between the two contending throngs, carrying its plunder of human corpses.

At the beginning of the action, or the butchery rather, the Kole mountaineers, led by the dashing and imprudent Kennybol, suffered most. It will be remembered that they made up the vanguard of the rebel army, and that they had entered the grove of fir-trees at the farther extremity of the pass. The hapless Kennybol had scarcely loaded his arquebuse, when the whole wood seemed to be peopled, as if by magic, with a host of relentless sharpshooters, who surrounded them in a flaming circle, while from a sort of platform that was surmounted by great leaning rocks, a whole battalion of the Munckholm regiment formed in square, and overwhelmed them with a terrifying and pitiless broadside. At this horrifying crisis, Kennybol in his despair cast his eyes about for the mysterious giant, seeing no further hope of safety, except through some superhuman agency, such as Hans of Iceland might exert; but he did not see the redoubtable demon suddenly spread out two immense wings and rise above the combatants, vomiting flames and destruction upon the arquebusiers; he did not see him suddenly expand his stature, till he could touch the clouds, and overturn a mountain upon the assailants, or stamp his foot and open an abyss under the ambushed battalions. The awful Hans of Iceland recoiled, as he did, before the first volley, and came with an almost terrified face to beg for a carbine; since his axe, as he explained in a decidedly human voice, was as useless at such a moment as an old woman's distaff.

The astonished but still credulous Kennybol handed his own musketoon to the giant, with a degree of alarm which nearly made him forgetful of his dread of the storm of bullets falling around him. Continuing to hope for a miracle, he

expected to see his weapon change in Hans of Iceland's hands to a big cannon, or transform itself into a winged dragon, darting fire from eyes, mouth, and nostrils. Nothing of the sort took place; and the astonishment of the poor hunter reached its climax when he saw the demon load the carbine with powder and lead, like any other man, level it in the usual way, and fire offhand, without even taking as much pains with his aim as Kennybol himself would have done. In stupefied surprise he watched as the operation was several times repeated; and finally convinced that no marvel was to be wrought, he began to think of what measures should be taken by human means to extricate his companions and himself from the evil situation in which they found themselves. Already his poor old comrade, Guldon Stayper, had fallen by his side, bleeding from many wounds; and all the mountaineers, realizing that escape was impossible, had clustered together, without thinking of defence, and set up a pitiful outcry. Kennybol could see what an admirable target such an assembly of men afforded to the enemy, for every volley took down a score or more. He ordered his unfortunate companions to separate, and take refuge in the bushes lining the road, which was wider at this place than anywhere else in Black Column pass, and to make the most effective response they could to the murderous fire from the sharpshooters and the battalion. The mountaineers, who were mostly very well armed, since they were all hunters, carried out their leader's orders with a submissiveness which perhaps they would not have shown at a less critical moment; for in the face of danger men generally lose their heads, and they are very willing to render obedience to any one who displays even a moderate degree of coolness and presence of mind.

This exhibition of prudence, however, was far from resulting in victory, or even in protection. Already more of the mountaineers had fallen than still remained in a condition to fight; and notwithstanding the example and encouragement of their leaders and of the giant, some of them stood leaning

upon their useless muskets, or stretched themselves out among the wounded, obstinately waiting for the death-blow which they had not spirit enough to parry in advance. It will seem surprising, perhaps, that men, accustomed all their days to defy danger as they ran from glacier to glacier in pursuit of wild beasts, should so quickly lose their courage; but it is a serious fact that in ordinary minds courage is a very limited virtue. A man may, perhaps, laugh at a volley of grapeshot, and tremble in the darkness, or at the verge of a precipice; he may attack savage animals from day to day, leap across chasms, and yet fly before a discharge of artillery. It is often the case that intrepidity is nothing but a habit, and that, though one may have ceased to fear death in certain forms, death itself is none the less an object of terror.

Surrounded by heaps of his dying comrades, Kennybol was himself beginning to despair, although he had as yet received but a trifling wound in the left arm, and although he could see that the diabolical giant continued to fulfil his duties as a musketeer with the most reassuring imperturbability. All at once he perceived indications of extraordinary confusion in the ranks of the battalion that stood upon the rocky heights; and he knew that the disturbance, whatever it was, could not be the result of the very slight damage that the weak and erratic fire of the mountaineers had been able to inflict. He heard frightful cries of distress,—the imprecations of the dying, and exclamations of horror coming from the victorious soldiery. Soon the fire was relaxed, the smoke lifted, and he could distinctly see enormous blocks of granite falling down the tall cliff that rose above the plateau, and crushing the Munckholm arquebusiers to the ground. The great missiles followed one another with awful rapidity; and they made a frightful noise as they struck against one another and fell among the soldiers, who broke their ranks, and hastened to descend in disorder from their post of vantage, and to fly in every direction.

At this unexpected manifestation of favor Kennybol turned

his head — the giant was still there! The mountaineer was dumb with amazement; for he had the idea that Hans of Iceland had at last taken flight, got to the top of the cliff, and proceeded to deal out destruction upon the enemy. He lifted his eyes to the summit whence the granite blocks were falling, and could see nothing. He could not believe that a band of rebels had succeeded in reaching such an advantageous position; since he could discern no gleaming weapons, nor could he hear any shouts of triumph.

Meanwhile the fire from the plateau had entirely ceased; and the remnant of the battalion, concealed by the trees, was probably re-forming at the base of the cliff. The sharpshooters also had relaxed their fire; and Kennybol, with characteristic military sagacity, took speedy profit from the unexpected opportunity. He rallied his companions, and pointed out to them, through the thick reddish smoke that covered the battlefield, the heaps of corpses piled up on the plateau under the fragments of rock that kept falling from moment to moment. Then the mountaineers responded to the groans of their enemies with shouts of victory. They formed in column; and although they were still harassed by the sharpshooters among the bushes, they were animated with fresh courage, and determined to get out of the ill-omened pass alive.

The column of mountaineers was about to move forward, and Kennybol had already given the signal on his horn, amid shouts of "Liberty! Liberty! Down with guardianship!" when in front of them arose the sound of drum and trumpet, sounding the charge. Then the remnant of the battalion, reinforced by other troops, debouched into the road, a musket-shot away, confronting the mountaineers with a bristling line of lances and bayonets, while behind them stood a supporting force, extending back to an unknown distance. Coming thus unexpectedly face to face with Kennybol's column, the battalion had halted; and one who seemed to be in command came forward, waving a little white flag, and escorted by a trumpeter.

The unforeseen appearance of the troops did not disconcert Kennybol. There is a point where the sense of danger gets to be commonplace, and surprise and fear are impossible. At the first notes from the drum and the trumpet, the old Kole fox checked his companions; and at the moment when the battalion front deployed in good order, he made his men load their carbines, and arranged them two by two, that they might present the least possible front to the enemy. Then he took his station at their head, side by side with the giant, with whom, in the heat of action, he had come to almost familiar terms, since he had ventured to notice that his eyes were not precisely like flaming fires, and that his supposed claws were not, after all, very much different from human fingernails.

When he saw the commander of the royal arquebusiers coming forward in an aspect of surrender, and when the firing of the sharpshooters was entirely suspended, — although their presence in the woods was still made manifest by their frequent shouts, — at this condition of affairs he paused for an instant in his preparation for defence. Meanwhile the officer with the white flag had crossed the space between the two forces, had come to a pause, and the trumpeter with him three times blew the summons. The officer then called out in a voice so loud that the mountaineers could hear it distinctly, notwithstanding the noise of the combat echoing behind them in the ravines, —

“In the king’s name! The king’s pardon is accorded to those rebels who will lay down their arms, and deliver up their leaders to his majesty’s sovereign justice!”

The words had scarcely been uttered when a shot came from the neighboring bushes. The officer tottered, took two or three steps, holding the white flag high in the air, and then fell, calling out, “Treachery!” No one could tell by whom the fatal shot had been fired.

“Traitors! Cowards!” the battalion of arquebusiers shouted, with groans of rage, and a terrific volley of musketry mowed down the mountaineers.

“Treachery!” the mountaineers now shouted, furious at seeing their comrades falling at their sides; and a general discharge of carbines responded to the soldiers’ unexpected volley.

“Upon them, men! Death to the cowards! Death!” the officers exclaimed.

“Death! Death!” the mountaineers replied.

From both sides the combatants sprang forward with uplifted swords; and close to the spot where the unfortunate officer had fallen, the two forces came together with a horrible clamor of shouts and clashing arms. The opposing ranks mingled inextricably. Rebel leaders and royal officers, soldiers and mountaineers, clutched and struck and throttled one another, like two herds of starving tigers meeting in the desert. Lances, bayonets, and halberds were useless; swords and axes were the only weapons that gleamed above the clustering contestants; and many of the fighters, contending body to body, were not able to employ any other means of attack than their daggers or their teeth.

Mountaineers and arquebusiers were animated by the same degree of fury and indignation; and cries of “Treachery!” and “Vengeance!” were bandied from mouth to mouth. The contest had reached that degree of ferocity when every heart gives full sway to irresistible passion, when the death of an enemy is preferable to one’s own life, when the heaps of dead and wounded are only dust under the feet, and when the dying rouse themselves to bite the feet of those who trample over them.

It was at this moment that a little man threw himself into the midst of the carnage, with horrible laughter and shrieks of joy. Some of the combatants, seeing him in his garb of beast-skins through the obscurity of the smoke and the steam from the blood of the fallen, took him for a wild animal. No one knew whence he had come, or for which side he fought; his stone axe made no choice of victims, and fell with equal fury on a rebel’s skull or a soldier’s body. He

seemed to take the most pleasure, however, in slaughtering the Munckholm arquebusiers. They all fled before him, as he ran from side to side in the thick of the fighting, like a demoniac spirit; and his bloody axe whirled round him ceaselessly, setting in motion a ghastly circle of fragments of flesh, dis severed limbs, and broken bones. Like the others, he shouted "Vengeance!" and uttered barbarous exclamations, now and then calling upon the name of Gill. The unknown antagonist took part in the carnage as if it had been a feast. A mountaineer, who had attracted his murderous glance, fell at the feet of the giant, to whom Kennybol had so vainly looked for assistance, and called out, —

"Hans of Iceland, save me!"

"Hans of Iceland!" the little man repeated, drawing nearer to the giant. "Are you Hans of Iceland?" he asked.

The giant's only response was to uplift an iron hatchet. The little man drew back, and buried his axe in the skull of the unfortunate fellow, who was imploring the giant for aid. The unknown burst into laughter.

"Oho; by Ingolphus! I thought Hans of Iceland had more skill than that."

"Thus Hans of Iceland succors those who pray to him!" said the giant.

"Thus and thus!"

The two formidable champions attacked one another in fury, the iron hatchet and the stone axe meeting with such a shock that both were shattered in a shower of sparks. Quicker than thought the little man seized a heavy wooden club that some dying man had let fall, and evading the clutch of his adversary dealt him a terrible blow, right on the forehead. The giant gave vent to a stifled cry, and fell. The little man danced triumphantly upon the body, foaming with joy.

"Your name was altogether too big for you," he said; and waving his club he went in search of new victims.

The giant was not dead. The violence of the blow had

stunned him, and he had fallen almost lifeless. He had begun to open his eyes and make a few weak movements, when an arquebusier saw him in the midst of the throng, and sprang upon him, shouting, —

“Hans of Iceland is taken! Victory!”

“Hans of Iceland is taken!” was repeated on every side, in tones of triumph or despair. The little man had disappeared.

For some time the mountaineers had felt that they must succumb to the attacking force; for the Munckholm arquebusiers had been strengthened by the sharpshooters from the woods and detachments of uhlans and dismounted dragoons, who had emerged at intervals from the farther recesses of the pass, where the surrender of the principal rebel leaders had put an end to the carnage. The worthy Kennybol, who had been wounded at the beginning of the action, was already a prisoner. The capture of Hans of Iceland wiped out what little courage the mountaineers still possessed. They laid down their arms.

As the first rays of dawn lit up the sharpened peaks of the upper glaciers, where darkness still brooded, silence reigned in Black Column pass, except for occasional feeble moans of pain that were tossed lightly hither and thither by the morning breeze. Great flocks of crows were hurrying toward the ravine from all points of the compass; and two or three poor goatherds, skirting the edge of the cliffs in the obscurity, turned back and fled in dismay to their shelters, affirming that they had seen a beast with human face, seated on a pile of corpses in the gorge below, drinking blood.

CHAPTER XL.

Burn then who will, within these hidden fires! — BRANTÔME.

“MY daughter, open the window; the glass obscures the light, and I want to see the day.”

“See the day, father? Twilight is almost here!”

“The sun still shines upon the hilltops along the shores of the bay. I want to get a breath of free air through the prison bars. The sky is so pure!”

“But, father, a storm is rising behind the horizon.”

“A storm, Ethel! What makes you think so?”

“The sky is so clear, father, that one should look for a storm.”

The old man glanced in surprise at the young girl. “If I had thought of that in my youth,” he said, “I should not be here now;” then he added, in a tone expressive of less emotion, “what you say is true, but not at your age. I cannot comprehend how it is that your youthful sagacity reaches to the same results as my ripened experience.”

Ethel looked down, as if she were disconcerted by this obvious reflection. She clasped her two hands in a sorrowful way, and uttered a profound sigh.

“My daughter,” said the old prisoner, “for several days you have been pale, as if the blood in your veins had lost its vitality. For several mornings you have appeared with red and swollen eyelids, as if you had been wakeful and weeping. Several days, Ethel, have gone by in silence, and your voice has offered me no consolation in my gloomy thoughts about the past. You seem to be more sad than I; and yet you are not afflicted, like your father, with the burden of an empty and useless life weighing upon the soul.

"Your youth has been nurtured in affliction, but it cannot reach your heart. Clouds that come in the morning quickly disappear. You are at that stage of existence when one makes choice in dreams of a future independent of the present, whatever that may be. What is the matter, my daughter? Thanks to the monotony of captivity, you are at least sheltered from unforeseen misfortunes. What fault have you committed? I cannot believe that you are grieving in my behalf; you ought to be accustomed now to my irremediable destiny. 'Tis true that hope no longer has a place in my scheme of things, but that is no reason why your eyes should speak only of despair."

As he thus spoke, the ordinarily magisterial tones of the prisoner were softened almost to a paternal accent. Ethel stood before him, and did not say a word. All at once she turned aside with a convulsive movement, and fell on her knees upon the stones, hiding her face in her hands, as if to stifle the tears and sobs that sought tumultuous escape from her breast. The heart of the unfortunate young girl was indeed torn with excessive suffering. How was it that the fateful stranger had been able to make her reveal the secret that was destroying her life? Alas, since Ordener's identity had been made known to her, the poor child had not been able to give her eyes to sleep or her spirit to repose. Night brought no solace, except the opportunity that she had of being able to weep in peace. It was all over with; he was no longer hers, — he, who had been bound to her by all her memories and griefs and prayers, — he, of whom she believed herself the chosen bride in the illusion of her dreams; for the night when Ordener had pressed her so tenderly in his arms was now in her thoughts nothing but a dream. As a dream, indeed, it had come back to her every night since; and so there was a sense of guilt in the love she still maintained, in spite of herself, for the absent one. Her Ordener affianced to another! Who can say what her virginal heart endured when the strange and unknown sentiment of jealousy slipped

into it like a viper ; when in long hours of wakefulness on her torturous bed, she pictured Ordener as being perhaps at that very moment in the arms of another woman, more beautiful, richer, and of higher rank than she ?

“ For,” she said to herself, “ I was foolish indeed to believe that he would run the risk of death for me. Ordener is the son of a viceroy, of a powerful nobleman, and I am nothing but a captive, the despised daughter of an outcast. He has his freedom ; and he has doubtless gone to espouse his beautiful betrothed, the daughter of a chancellor, of a minister, of a haughty count ; but can it be that my Ordener deceived me ? O God, who would have believed that such a voice had falsehood in it ? ”

The unhappy Ethel wept and wept, as in fancy she saw Ordener, who had been like a god to her maiden soul, walking to the altar, arrayed in all the splendor suited to his rank, surrounded by festal pomp, and awarding to another the smile that had been her only joy. In the very midst of her inexpressible despair, however, she did not for a moment forget her filial affection. The gentle girl had made the most heroic efforts to conceal her sorrow from her unfortunate father ; for the most distressing thing, when one is in grief, is the suppression of its external expression ; the tears that fall into the heart are more bitter than those that are shed from the eyes. It was several days before the old man in his abstraction saw any change in Ethel, and the almost affectionate questions that he had addressed to her had at length inspired the flood of tears that had been too long pent up within her. For some time the father stood, shaking his head, and watching with a bitter smile as his daughter wept.

“ Ethel,” he said at length, “ you do not live among men ; why do you weep ? ”

He had scarcely finished speaking when the gentle, noble-hearted girl rose to her feet. By a strenuous effort she had repressed her tears, and was wiping her eyes with her scarf.

"My father," she said appealingly, "my lord and father, pardon me; it was a moment of weakness."

Then she looked at him with a wistful attempt at a smile, went to the other side of the room to get the *Edda*, and came and sat down near her taciturn father, opening the book at random. Quieting the emotion in her voice, she began to read; but the words made no impression, either on her mind or on that of her father. The latter made a gesture of dissent.

"Enough — enough, my daughter!" She closed the book. "Ethel," Schumacker went on, "do you still sometimes think of Ordener?" The young girl trembled and hesitated, on the point of speaking. "Yes," her father added; "the Ordener who went away."

"My lord and father," Ethel interrupted, "why should we concern ourselves about him? I think, with you, that he is gone, never to return."

"Never to return, my daughter! I could not have said that. On the contrary, some presentiment tells me that he will come back."

"Such was not your idea, my noble father, when you spoke to me so doubtingly with regard to the young man."

"Did I speak doubtingly of him?"

"Yes, my father; and I have come to look at the matter in the same light as you did. I think that he has deceived us."

"That he has deceived us, my daughter! If I were of that opinion, I should be acting as men generally do when they condemn without proof. I have seen in Ordener nothing but evidences of devotion."

"And do you know, my venerable father, that his cordial speech did not conceal perfidious thoughts?"

"Ordinarily men do not trouble themselves about those who are in misfortune and disgrace. If Ordener had not been attached to me, he would not have come in the way he did to my prison, without some object."

"Are you sure," Ethel responded, in a hesitating way, "that he did not have an object in coming here?"

“And what?” the old man demanded earnestly.

Ethel did not reply. She could not now go on bringing accusations against Ordener, the beloved, when she had formerly defended him against her father.

“I am no longer Count of Griffenfeld,” the latter went on. “I am no longer grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway, dispenser of royal favors, and all-powerful minister. I am a miserable state prisoner, a proscribed man, a political outlaw. It takes a good deal of courage to speak of me without execrations to the men whom I loaded with honors and benefits; it requires devotion to cross the threshold of this dungeon, unless one is a jailer or an executioner; it takes heroism, my daughter, to come here and address me as friend. No, I am not an ingrate, like the rest of the human race. This young man deserves my gratitude, even for letting me see a benevolent face, and letting me hear a sympathetic voice.”

Ethel listened in torture to language which a few days before, when Ordener was her Ordener, in her heart, would have overwhelmed her with delight. The old man, after a moment's pause, went on solemnly, —

“Listen to me, my daughter, for what I am going to say to you is serious. I realize that I am gradually failing; my life is little by little ebbing away; yes, my daughter, the end draws near.”

“In God's name, my father,” Ethel interrupted, with a stifled moan, “do not speak in that way! Spare your poor daughter, I beg of you; alas, do you want to abandon her also? What is to become of her when your protection is taken away, and she is left alone in the world?”

“The protection of a political outlaw!” said the father, shaking his head. “Well, it was of that I was thinking. Yes, your future happiness is more of a question with me than my past misfortune. Listen to me, then, and do not interrupt me. Ordener does not deserve to be judged so severely by you, my daughter; and up to now I did not suppose that you felt so much aversion toward him. His bearing is frank and

noble ; that proves nothing, I acknowledge, but it seems to me that he may perhaps be not altogether lacking in virtue, although, since he carries a human heart, the germs of every vice and every crime may be lurking there. There is no fire without smoke." The old man paused again, and fixing his glance on his daughter, added, "Warned by an inner presentiment of the approach of death, I have thought about him, and about you, Ethel ; and if he comes back, as I hope he will, I will give him to you for your protector and husband."

Ethel turned pale and trembled. At the very moment when her dream of happiness had vanished forever, her father was trying to make it a reality. The bitter thought, "I might have been happy !" gave added intensity to her despair. She stood for a moment without speaking, striving to keep back the burning tears that filled her eyes. Her father waited.

"What," she said at length, in a faltering voice ; "you choose him for my husband, my lord and father, when you know nothing about his rank, his family, or his name ?"

"I did not choose him for you, my daughter ; but I choose him for you now." The old man's tone was almost imperious. Ethel sighed. "I choose him for you now, I tell you ; and what do I care about his rank ? I do not need to know his family, since I know him. Consider — this is the only anchor of safety that remains to you. Fortunately, I have reason to believe that he does not feel the same repugnance toward you that you show toward him." The poor young girl lifted her eyes to heaven. "You understand me, Ethel ; I repeat, what is his rank to me ? He is no doubt of humble birth, since those who are born in palaces do not frequent prisons. Yes, and do not manifest vain regrets, my daughter ; do not forget that Ethel Schumacker is no longer Princess of Wollin and Countess of Tongsberg ; you have descended to a lower level than that from which your father began to rise. Be happy, then, if this man will accept your hand, whatever his family may be. If he is of humble birth, so much the

better, my daughter ; your days will be all the more secure from the storms that have destroyed your father's fortunes. Bearing a humble name, you will lead a humble life, far from the envy and the hate of men, — a life very different from mine, because it will end more fortunately than it began."

"O my father, have pity !" said Ethel, falling on her knees.

"What is it you would say, my daughter ?" he inquired, stretching out his arms in surprise.

"In the name of Heaven do not depict such happiness ; it is not for me !"

"Ethel," said the old man severely, "do not trifle with your future. I refused the hand of a princess royal, — a princess of Holstein-Augustenburg, — do you understand ? — and my pride has been cruelly punished. You disdain the hand of an obscure but loyal man ; tremble, lest your punishment be even more pitiless !"

"Would to Heaven," murmured Ethel, "that he were a man loyal and obscure !"

The old man walked up and down the room in agitation.

"My daughter," he said, "'tis your poor father who begs you and orders you to do this. Do not let me go to my death disquieted about your future ; promise me to accept this stranger as your spouse."

"I shall always obey you, my father ; but do not hope for his return."

"I have weighed the probability ; and I think, judging by the way in which Ordener spoke your name" —

"That he loves me," Ethel interrupted bitterly ; "oh, no ; do not believe that !"

"I do not know," the father responded coldly, "whether, to employ your girlish expression, he loves you ; but I know that he will come back."

"Do not cling to that idea, my noble father. It may be, too, that you would not desire him for your son-in-law, if you knew him."

“Ethel, my son-in-law he shall be, whatever his name or rank.”

“Well,” she responded, “if this young man, whom you look upon as a source of consolation, and whom you would like to see your daughter’s protector,—if this young man, my lord and father, were the son of one of your mortal enemies, the viceroy of Norway and Count of Guldenlew,—then what?”

“What are you saying?” said Schumacker, recoiling. “Great God! Ordener! That Ordener! ’Tis impossible!”

The expression of unappeasable hatred that flashed in the old man’s dull eyes struck terror to Ethel’s trembling heart, and the young girl bitterly repented the imprudent words that she had just uttered. The arrow had struck the mark. Schumacker stood motionless for a few moments, with folded arms. His body was convulsed, as if he had been stretched on a burning gridiron, his flaming eyes started from their sockets, and the glance he fixed upon the stone floor was like a lightning bolt. At length a few words came from his purple lips, uttered in the weak voice of a man in a dream.

“Ordener! Yes; that’s it,—Ordener Guldenlew! ’Tis well. Ah, Schumacker, you old fool; you open your arms, do you, to the loyal young man who comes to knife you!” Then he struck his foot upon the stones, and his speech rolled forth like thunder. “’Tis thus they send one of their infamous race to insult me in my downfall and my captivity! I had already seen an Ahlefeld; I came near smiling on a Guldenlew! The monsters! Who would have believed that Ordener had such a soul, and carried such a name? Woe to me — woe to him!”

Then he fell exhausted into his armchair; and while his over-burdened breast was swelling with long sighs, poor Ethel trembled in alarm, and wept at his feet.

“Do not weep, my daughter,” he said in ominous tones; “come, oh, come to my heart!”

He pressed her in his arms. Ethel did not know what to

make of a caress coming at such a wrathful moment, when he added, "At any rate, young girl, you have been more sagacious than your old father. You were not deceived by the soft-eyed, venomous serpent. I thank you that you have given me something of your hate for that execrable Ordener!"

"My lord and father," she said, shuddering at praise she knew was not deserved, "my father, calm yourself!"

"Promise me," Schumacker went on, "that you will always have the same feeling toward Guldenlew's son — swear it to me!"

"God forbids oaths, my father."

"Swear it, my daughter," Schumacker repeated vehemently. "Is it not true that you will always retain the same feeling for Ordener Guldenlew?"

"Always!" Ethel responded, without hesitation.

"'Tis well, my daughter," said the old man, drawing her to him; "'tis well that I bequeath to you at least the hatred I have for my despoilers, if I cannot bequeath to you the riches and the honor that they took from me. Listen! They robbed your old father of his rank and glory, and they dragged him to the scaffold in chains, blackening him with every infamy, that they might make his torture the less to be endured. The wretches — and to me they owed the power which they turned against me! Oh, may heaven and hell bear witness, and may they be cursed in their own existence, and cursed in their posterity!"

He was silent for a moment; then he embraced his poor daughter, who was horrified at his imprecations.

"But, my Ethel, — you who are my only glory and my only riches, — tell me how it was that your instinct was more discerning than mine? How did you discover that the traitor bore one of the abhorrent names that are written in letters of fire on my heart? How did you guess his secret?"

She was gathering all her strength to make response, when the door opened, and a man dressed in black, carrying an ebony staff in his hand, and wearing a chain of burnished

steel about his neck, appeared upon the threshold, attended by halberdiers in the same sombre attire.

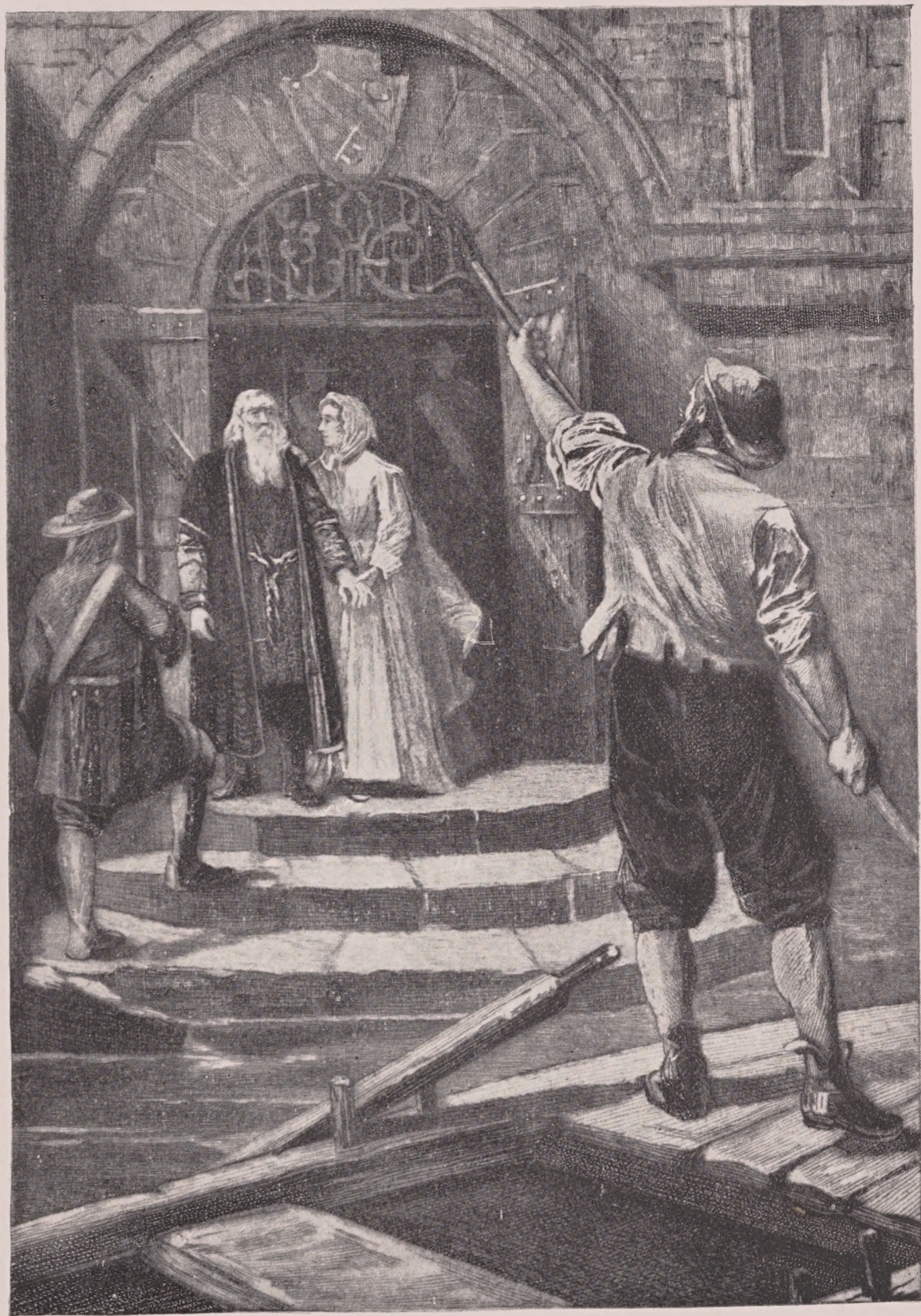
"What do you want of me?" the captive demanded harshly, in astonishment.

The man made no reply, and without looking at him unrolled a long parchment, to which a seal of green wax hung by silken threads. He read, in a loud voice, —

"In the name of his majesty, our gracious lord and sovereign, Christiern, the king: Schumacker, prisoner of state in the royal fortress of Munckholm, and his daughter, are enjoined to follow the bearer of this order."

"What do you want of me?" Schumacker repeated. The man in black made no response, except to begin again to read the parchment. "Enough!" said the old man.

Rising to his feet, he signed to the surprised and horrified Ethel to follow with him the lead of their lugubrious escort.



“‘WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?’ THE CAPTIVE DEMANDED HARSHLY,
IN ASTONISHMENT.”

CHAPTER XLI.

A lugubrious signal is given. A servile agent of the law knocks at his door, and warns him that he is needed elsewhere. — JOSEPH DE MAISTRE.

DARKNESS had fallen, and a cold wind was whistling around the accursed tower. The doors of the Vygla ruin shook on their hinges, as if some all-embracing hand had them in its clutches. The barbarous inhabitants of the place, the executioner and his family, were sitting about a fire that had been lighted in the middle of the apartment, on the second floor, and that threw fluctuating shadows with its reddish light over their sombre faces and scarlet clothing. The features of the children expressed something of the father's ferocious grin and the mother's frantic leer. Their eyes, like Bechlie's, were turned on Orugix, who sat on a wooden stool, apparently out of breath, and who, judging further by the thick dust upon his feet, had just arrived from some distant journey.

"Listen, woman ; listen, children ! I have not been away two whole days to bring back bad news. If I'm not royal executioner within a month, I don't know how to make a slip-noose or handle an axe. Cheer up, my little cubs ; your heritage from your father may perhaps be the Copenhagen scaffold."

"Nychol," asked Bechlie, "what is it ?"

"And you, my old wanton," Nychol responded, with a hearty laugh, "you also may rejoice ! You can buy a string of blue glass beads to decorate your withered stork's neck. Our arrangement soon expires ; but in a month or so, when you see me head executioner of the two kingdoms, you will not refuse to make another bargain with me, is it not so ?"

“What is it — tell us what it is, father?” the children demanded, the elder riding on a blood-stained trestle, while the younger amused himself by plucking feathers from a little bird that he had taken from its mother, out of the very nest.

“What is it, children? Kill that bird, Haspar; I’d rather hear a dull saw shriek; and besides, you mustn’t be cruel — kill it. What is it? Nothing, — really a mere trifling event, Dame Bechlie, — simply that in a week or so Schumacker, the ex-chancellor, now a prisoner at Munckholm, after our friendly little interview at Copenhagen, and the famous Iceland brigand, Hans of Klipstadur, may both come under my hand at the same time.”

The red woman’s wandering glance took on an expression of astonishment and curiosity.

“Schumacker! Hans of Iceland! How can that be, Nychol?”

“Here is the whole story. Yesterday morning I met the whole regiment of Munckholm arquebusiers, on the Skongen road, at Ordal’s bridge; they were returning to Drontheim, as if they had achieved some great victory. I questioned one of the soldiers, who condescended to reply to me, probably because he didn’t know why I wear a red jacket, and ride in a red cart. I learned that the arquebusiers were returning from Black Column pass, after completely destroying the brigand mob of insurgent miners. Now, you know, old wench, that the rebels revolted in Schumacker’s name, and were under the leadership of Hans of Iceland. You know that this general uprising makes Hans of Iceland guilty of the choice little crime of insurrection against royal authority, and that in Schumacker’s case it is the gracious offence of high treason. The very natural result is, that both of these honorable gentlemen come to the gallows or the block. When you think of these two magnificent executions, that cannot fail to bring me in at least fifteen gold ducats, and make my reputation glorious throughout the two kingdoms — when you think of this, and that there are others of less importance” —

“Do you mean to say,” Bechlie interrupted, “that Hans of Iceland has been taken?”

“Why do you interrupt your lord and master, base woman?” said the executioner. “Yes; the notorious and invincible Hans of Iceland has been taken, with several other brigand leaders, his lieutenants, who will bring me in a dozen crowns apiece, without reckoning what the bodies will be worth. He’s taken, I assure you; and wholly to satisfy your curiosity you may like to know that I saw him go by under military guard.”

The woman and the two children came quickly up to Orugix.

“What, you saw him, father?” the children exclaimed.

“Be quiet, children; you make as much noise as a convict pleading innocence. Yes, I saw him, — a sort of giant, going by with his arms fastened behind his back, and his forehead bandaged. Probably he was wounded in the head; but he needn’t worry about that, because it won’t be long before I shall cure him.” With this horrible jest, the executioner made a motion with his hand, and went on. “Four of his companions, wounded the same as he was, and also prisoners, came behind him. They were being taken to Drontheim, where they are to be tried with the ex-chancellor Schumacker, before a tribunal of which the chief syndic will be a member, and over which the present grand chancellor will preside.”

“Father, what did the other prisoners look like?”

“The first two were old men; one of them wore a miner’s hat, and the other a mountaineer’s cap. Both seemed to be very much cast down. Of the two others, one was a young miner, who went along with his head up, and whistling; the other — do you remember, you infernal Bechlie, the travellers who came to the tower a fortnight ago, the night of the big storm?”

“As Satan remembers the day of his fall,” the woman responded.

“Did you notice, among those strangers, a young man who

was in company with the old crazy doctor with a big wig, — a young man, I say, wearing a large green cloak, and having a black plume in his hat ? ”

“ Of a truth, I think I can still see him before my eyes, saying, ‘ Woman, we have gold. ’ ”

“ Well, old hag, may I never strangle anything but grouse, if the fourth prisoner was not that young man. ’Tis true his face was wholly concealed by his plume, his hat, his hair, and his cloak, and he went with his head down ; but he wore the same clothes and the same boots, and he carried himself in the same way. I’ll swallow the stone gibbet at Skongen at one gulp, if ’twas not the same man ! What do you say to that, Bechlie ? Won’t it be fine, after prolonging the stranger’s life by giving him food and shelter, to be called upon also to put an end to him, and to find that after having experienced my hospitality, he is to know something of my dexterity ? ”

The executioner chuckled sardonically for some time, and then went on, —

“ Now rejoice, all of you, and let us drink — yes, Bechlie, give me a sup of your beer, that rasps the throat like a row of files, and let me drink to my future advancement. Here you are, — health and honors to master Nychol Orugix, royal executioner that is to be ! I’ll confess to you, old sinner, that I could hardly bring myself to be willing to go to Nœs for such a paltry job as the hanging of an obscure cabbage thief ; but when I had thought the matter over, I concluded that thirty-two ascalins were not to be disdained, and that my hands would not be degraded by executing common thieves and other scum of that kind, until after they had beheaded the noble count and ex-grand chancellor, and the famous Iceland demon. So I resigned myself to the task of helping off the poor wretch at Nœs, pending the arrival of my commission as royal executioner ; and here,” he added, taking a leather purse from his haversack — “ here are the thirty-two ascalins for you, old woman.”

At this moment a blast from a horn, three times repeated, came from without the tower.

"Woman," Orugix exclaimed, jumping up, "those are the chief syndic's archers!" Saying this, he hurried down the stairs. A moment later he reappeared, carrying a large parchment, of which he had broken the seal. "There," he said to the woman, "this is what the chief syndic sends me. Cipher it out for me, since you could read Satan's magic scroll. Perhaps it's my commission; for if the tribunal is to have a grand chancellor for its president, and a grand chancellor to try, it is no more than right that the one to carry out the decree should be a royal executioner."

The woman took the parchment; and after looking it over for some time she read in a loud voice, while the children stared at her stupidly, —

"'In the name of the chief syndic of Drontheimhus, ordered: that Nychol Orugix, provincial executioner, shall report at once at Drontheim, with his official axe, block, and black hangings.'"

"Is that all?" the executioner demanded discontentedly.

"That's all," Bechlie responded.

"Provincial executioner!" Orugix muttered. He stood for a moment, looking ill-naturedly at the official parchment. "Well," he said finally, "I must obey, and get started. It seems they want the official axe and black hangings. You will take care, Bechlie, to scour the axe so that it won't show a spot of rust, and see if the hangings are free from stains. After all, we mustn't be discouraged; perhaps they will grant me promotion as a reward for this grand execution. The victims are to be pitied, however, for they will not have the satisfaction of being put to death by a royal executioner."

CHAPTER XLII.

Elvira. What can have become of poor Sancho? He's not appeared in the town.

Nuno. Sancho is wise enough to keep under cover.

LOPE DE VEGA: *The Best Alcade is the King*

THE Count of Ahlefeld, trailing behind him a voluminous black satin robe lined with ermine, his head and shoulders almost hidden under an immense judicial wig, wearing on his breast a multitude of stars and decorations, among them the collars of the royal orders of the Elephant and Dannebrog, — clad, in fact, in the full costume of the grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway, — was pacing anxiously to and fro in the apartments of the Countess of Ahlefeld, she being alone with him at that moment.

“Well, it's nine o'clock, and the court is about to open session. There must be no delay; for judgment must be rendered during the night, so that it may be carried out to-morrow morning at the latest. The chief syndic has assured me that the executioner will be here before dawn. Elphega, have you given orders that a boat shall be ready to take me to Munckholm?”

“My lord, it has been waiting for you for at least half an hour,” the countess responded, sitting upright in her easy chair.

“And is my litter at the door?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Very good. And you say, Elphega,” the count went on, tapping his forehead, “that there is a love-affair between Ordener Guldenlew and Schumacker's daughter?”

“A good deal of a love-affair, I can swear to you,” the countess replied, smiling with anger and disdain,

“Who would have thought it? And yet, I assure you, I suspected something of the sort.”

“And I also,” said the countess. “It’s a trick that accursed Levin has played on us.”

“The old Mecklemburg scoundrel!” the chancellor muttered. “Well, I’ll fix it with Arensdorf—if I could get him disgraced! Why, see here; listen to me, Elphega—here’s a ray of light.”

“What is it?”

“You know that there are six persons who are about to be tried at Munckholm fortress,—Schumacker, whom I shall be no longer in fear of, I hope, by to-morrow at this hour; the giant mountaineer, our false Hans of Iceland, who has sworn to play the part to the end, thinking that Musdæmon, who has already given him a lot of money, will get him off—that Musdæmon has some really diabolical ideas!—the three rebel leaders; and an unknown fellow, who mixed himself up in some way with the gathering at Apsylcorh, and who, through Musdæmon’s precautions, has fallen into our hands. Musdæmon thinks that the man is one of Levin de Knud’s spies; and, in fact, when he was brought here as a prisoner, the first thing he did was to ask for the general; and when he found out that the Mecklemburger was away, he seemed to be completely crushed. It appears, too, that he has not been willing to respond to any of Musdæmon’s questions.”

“My dear lord,” the countess interrupted, “why have you not interrogated him yourself?”

“Be reasonable, Elphega: how could I, with all the duties that have come upon me since my arrival? I trusted the matter to Musdæmon, who is just as much concerned as I am. You must remember, too, my dear, that this man is of no importance as an individual; he’s some poor vagabond. The only way we can get any good from him will be in claiming that he is one of Levin de Knud’s agents; and as he was taken in the rebel ranks, that perhaps will show that there was some treasonable understanding between Schumacker and the Meck-

lemburger, and that will perhaps suffice to throw discredit on the infernal Levin, if it does not subject him to a judicial inquiry."

"You are right, my lord," said the countess, after a moment's thought; "but what about Baron Thorvick's fatal passion for Ethel Schumacker?"

The chancellor tapped his forehead again, and shrugged his shoulders.

"See here, Elphega, you and I are not young or novices in life, and yet we do not understand men! When Schumacker is for a second time branded with high treason, and is once more brought to the scaffold and punished for infamy; when his daughter is cast down beneath the lowest social ranks, and stained forever in public opinion with her father's shame — do you suppose, Elphega, that Ordener Guldenlew will then for a moment remember his childish intrigue, which you call passion, because you have been influenced by the high-flown talk of a foolish young prisoner — do you think he will hesitate for a single day between the dishonored daughter of a wretched criminal and the illustrious daughter of an eminent chancellor? We must judge men by ourselves, my dear; when have you ever had reason to think that the human heart is made up in that way?"

"I hope that you may be right. You will not, however, regard as useless, I trust, the request which I made of the syndic, that Schumacker's daughter might be present at her father's trial, and be placed in the same gallery with me? I am very desirous of having a chance to study the creature."

"Anything that will help us to understand the affair any better is quite worth while," said the chancellor carelessly. "But, tell me, is Ordener's whereabouts known at this moment?"

"Not to any one; he's a worthy ward to old Levin, and a knight errant, like him. I believe he is just now at Wardhus."

"Well, well, our Ulrica will tie him down. There, I forgot that the court is waiting for me."

"One word more, my lord," said the countess, detaining the grand chancellor. "I spoke to you about it yesterday; but you were very much preoccupied, and I could get no response. Where is my Frederic?"

"Frederic!" said the count, with a lugubrious expression, putting his hand to his face.

"Yes; answer me — my Frederic! His regiment has returned to Drontheim without him. Swear to me that Frederic was not in that horrible Black Column pass. Why did you look so at Frederic's name? I am terribly anxious."

"Elphega," said the chancellor, resuming his expression of impassivity, "don't be uneasy. I swear to you that he was not in Black Column pass. Moreover, the list of officers killed and wounded in that affair has been published."

"Yes," said the countess, calming down; "you make me feel easier. Only two officers were killed, — Captain Lory and young Baron Randmer, who was such a gay second to my poor Frederic at the Copenhagen festivities. Oh, yes; I have read the list more than once, I assure you. But, tell me, my lord, did my son remain at Wahlstrom?"

"He remained there," the count responded.

"Well, dear friend," said the mother, with a smile which she tried to make affectionate, "I only ask one favor of you, and that is to get my Frederic back from that dreadful country as quickly as possible."

The chancellor disengaged himself with difficulty from her supplicating embrace.

"Madam," he said, "the court is waiting. Farewell; what you ask does not depend upon me."

He went out quickly, and the countess was wrapped up in gloomy thoughts.

"Does not depend on him," she said to herself; "and he has only to utter a word to bring my son back to me! I have always thought him to be a man without a grain of goodness in his heart."

CHAPTER XLIII.

Is it thus that a man of my condition should be treated? Is it thus that respect for justice should be sacrificed? — CALDERON: *Luis Perez of Galicia.*

THE trembling Ethel, separated from her father by the guards when they came out of the Lion of Schleswig donjon, was led through gloomy corridors that she had never seen before, into an ill-lighted cell, where she was fastened in. Through a large barred opening in the side of the cell opposite to the door, she could see the light of flaming torches. In front of the opening was a bench, where a woman, wearing a veil and clad in black, was sitting. She motioned to Ethel to sit at her side; and the girl obeyed in timid silence, and looked out through the barred opening. A sombre and imposing picture was before her.

She saw a hall hung in black, and partly illuminated by copper lamps hanging from the ceiling, and at one end of the apartment a black bench, shaped like a horseshoe, occupied by seven judges wearing black robes, one of them sitting in the middle, somewhat higher than the others, with diamond chains and gold medals sparkling on his breast. The judge sitting on the right of the place of honor wore a white girdle and an ermine mantle, the insignia of the chief syndic of the province. At the right of the bench was a platform surmounted by a canopy, where an old man sat, dressed in full pontificals. At the left was a table strewn with papers, behind which stood a short man, wearing an enormous wig, and an ample long black robe. In front of the judges was a wooden bench, surrounded by halberdiers carrying torches, the light flashing from a multitude of lances, muskets, and partisans, and sending flickering rays over the thronging heads of

a crowd of spectators who pressed against the barrier separating them from the court.

Ethel watched the scene as if she had been in a waking dream, but she was far from being indifferent to what was going on before her eyes. An inner voice warned her to pay careful attention, and that she was close upon a critical moment in her life. Her heart was agitated by two conflicting emotions at one and the same time; she felt that she would like to know at once what it was that interested her in the scene she was watching, or else that she might never know it at all. For several days her conviction that Ordener was lost to her had inspired her with a desperate desire to put an end to her own existence, and to be able to read at a single glance the entire book of destiny. Thus it was that, understanding that she had come to the decisive hour of her fate, she scrutinized the lugubrious picture presented to her, not so much with repugnance, as with a sort of impatient and gloomy joy. She saw the president get up, and announce in the king's name that the court had begun its session. She heard the little man in black at the left reading, in a low voice and rapidly, a long discourse in which her father's name frequently appeared, intermingled with the words "conspiracy," "miners' revolt," and "high treason." Then she remembered what the hateful stranger had told her in the donjon garden of the accusation with which her father was menaced, and she shuddered when she heard the man in the black robe bring his allocution to an end with the word "death" loudly spoken. In her alarm she turned to the veiled woman, towards whom for some inexplicable reason she had a sensation of fear.

"Where are we? What does all this mean?" she asked timidly.

A gesture from her mysterious companion urged her to be silent and attend. She looked again into the hall where the court was sitting. The venerable old man in ecclesiastical attire had just arisen; and Ethel heard these words, which he uttered very distinctly, —

“In the name of the all-powerful and merciful God, I, Pamphilus Eleuthera, bishop of the royal city of Drontheim and the royal province of Drontheimhus, make my salutation to the honorable tribunal which renders judgment in the name of the king, who is our ruler next to God; and I say that having observed that the prisoners brought before this court are men and Christians, and that they are without counsel, I make known to the honorable judges that my intention is to assist them, with such feeble aid as I can, in the trying position in which Heaven has seen fit to place them, praying God to deign to add his strength to our humble weakness, and to give his light to our unmitigated blindness; and so I, bishop of the royal diocese, present my salutations to this honorable and impartial tribunal.”

Having thus spoken, the bishop came down from his pontifical throne, and took his seat on the wooden bench reserved for the prisoners, while a murmur of approbation swept through the throng. The president got up, and said in formal tones:

“Halberdiers, see that order is observed! My lord bishop, the court thanks your reverence in the name of the prisoners. Citizens of Drontheimhus, be attentive to the king’s high court of justice; this tribunal renders a verdict without appeal. Archers, bring in the accused.”

Silence, inspired by anxiety and terror, pervaded the assembly; but the people’s heads could be seen moving about in the obscurity like the gloomy waves of a stormy sea, over which the thunderbolt is on the point of crashing. In a moment Ethel heard a confused murmur and unusual commotion beneath her, in the ominous approaches to the hall; then the assembly opened a path with impatient and feverish haste, the tramp of many feet was heard, halberds and muskets glistened, and then six men in chains and surrounded by guards came bareheaded into the open space before the judges. Ethel saw only the first of the six prisoners, — an old white-bearded man in a black gown; ’twas her father. Almost fainting, she leaned upon the stone balustrade in front of the bench where

she was sitting. Everything went round her in a dizzy whirl, and it seemed to her that her heart was beating in her ears. She said in feeble tones, —

“O God, succor me!”

The veiled woman leaned towards her with a vial of smelling-salts, which revived her.

“Noble lady,” said the girl, “say one word, I beg of you, to convince me that I am not the sport of infernal phantoms.”

But the unknown remained deaf to her entreaty, and turned her head toward the tribunal; and poor Ethel, who by this time had after a fashion recovered her strength, resigned herself to doing likewise, in silence. The president arose, and said in a slow and solemn voice, —

“Prisoners, you have been brought before us that we may examine you, to determine whether or not you are guilty of high treason, conspiracy, and armed insurrection against the authority of our sovereign lord, the king. Consider carefully, and let conscience speak for you, since the accusation of leze-majesty in the first degree is hanging over your heads.”

At that moment a ray of light fell upon the face of one of the six prisoners, — a young man, with his head bowed upon his breast, as if to conceal his features under his long curly hair. Ethel shuddered, and a cold perspiration broke out upon her body; she thought she recognized — but no, it was a cruel illusion. The hall was dimly lighted, and men moved about like shadows. She could scarcely distinguish the great Christ of polished ebony posed above the president’s arm-chair. Nevertheless, the young man wore a cloak which looked to be green in the distance, and his dishevelled hair had a chestnut tint; moreover, the light that had fallen by chance upon his features — but no, she was mistaken; it could not be; it was a horrible illusion.

The prisoners seated themselves upon the bench with the bishop, Schumacker placed at one end, separated from the young man with chestnut hair by his four companions in misfortune, who were roughly dressed, one of them being

almost a giant. The bishop sat at the other end of the bench. Ethel saw the president turn toward her father.

"Old man," he said sternly, "tell us your name, and who you are."

"There was a time," the prisoner responded, lifting his venerable head, and looking fixedly at the president, "when I was called Count of Griffenfeld and Tonsberg, Prince of Wollin, Prince of the Holy Empire, Knight of the royal Order of the Elephant, Knight of the royal Order of Dannebrog, Knight of the Golden Fleece of Germany and of the Garter of England, prime minister, inspector-general of the universities, grand chancellor of Denmark, and" —

"Prisoner," the president interrupted, "the court does not ask what you were named, or what you have been, but what your name is, and who you are."

"Very good," the old man responded briskly, "my name now is John Schumacker. I am sixty-nine years old, and I am nothing but your former benefactor, Chancellor Ahlefeld." The president was manifestly embarrassed. "I recognized you, my lord count," the ex-chancellor added, "and, thinking that you were not so well informed as I, took the liberty of recalling to your grace the fact that we are old acquaintances."

"Schumacker," said the president, in a tone expressive of ill-concealed anger, "do not intrude upon the time at the disposal of the court."

"We have changed places, noble chancellor," said the old prisoner, once more interrupting; "once I called you simply Ahlefeld, and you addressed me as my lord count."

"Prisoner," the president responded, "you do injury to your own cause by recalling the conviction for infamy, in accordance with which you have already been disgraced."

"If that conviction was infamous for any one, Count of Ahlefeld, it was not so for me."

The old man half rose to his feet to give greater emphasis to his words. The president thrust out his hand.

"Be seated. Do not offer insult, before this court, to the judges who condemned you, and to the king who gave you a fair trial. Remember that his majesty deigned to grant you your life, and now devote yourself to your defence." Schumacker made no response, except with a shrug of the shoulders. "Have you," the president demanded, "any avowal to make to the court touching the high crime of which you are accused?" Seeing that Schumacker remained silent, the president repeated his question.

"Are you speaking to me?" said the ex-grand chancellor. "I thought, noble Count of Ahlefeld, that you were speaking to yourself. To what crime do you have reference? Have I ever given the Judas kiss to a friend? Have I imprisoned, condemned, and dishonored a benefactor, or despoiled him to whom I owe my all? To tell you the truth, my lord chancellor, I do not know why I have been brought here. No doubt it is that I may judge of your ability in bringing innocent heads to the dust. I shall not be sorry, I assure you, to see if you can succeed as well in ruining me as in ruining the kingdom, and if a comma will suffice to bring me to my death, as a letter of the alphabet once proved to be enough to bring about war with Sweden."¹

This ironical speech was barely brought to an end, when the man behind the table, at the left of the court, rose to his feet.

"My lord president," he said with a low bow, "my lord judges, I demand that John Schumacker be denied the privilege of speaking, if he continues in this way to insult his grace, the president of this honorable tribunal."

¹ As a matter of fact, there were very serious differences between Denmark and Sweden, because the Count of Ahlefeld, in the negotiation of a treaty between the two countries, had insisted on giving the Danish king the title of *Rex Gothorum*, which implied that the Danish monarch had sovereignty over the Swedish province of Gothland, while the Swedes were willing to grant no more than that he should be styled *Rex Gotorum*, — a vague distinction, equivalent to the ancient title of the Danish sovereigns, "king of the Gots." It was to this "h," which was the cause, not of a war, but of prolonged and threatening negotiations, that Schumacker doubtless made allusion.

“Mr. Confidential Secretary,” said the bishop tranquilly, “the right to address the court cannot be denied to a prisoner.”

“You are right, reverend bishop,” the president exclaimed quickly. “Our intention is to allow to the defence the utmost possible latitude. I shall only suggest to the accused that he moderate his language, if he would consider his own best interests.”

“It seems,” said Schumacker coldly, shaking his head, “that the Count of Ahlefeld is more sure of his facts than he was in 1677.”

“Be silent,” said the president; and addressing himself immediately to the prisoner sitting next to the old man, he asked him for his name. A mountaineer of colossal stature, with his head bandaged, stood up and said, —

“I am Hans of Klipstadur in Iceland.”

A shudder of horror ran through the crowd; and Schumacker raised his head, which he had already let fall in meditation upon his breast, and cast a sharp glance at the formidable companion, from whom the other prisoners kept as far away as possible.

“Hans of Iceland,” the president demanded when the audience had become quiet, “what have you to say to the court?”

Among all the spectators, Ethel was the least impressed with the presence of the famous brigand, who had for so long a time figured in her fancy as an object of terror. She looked with timid curiosity at the great giant, with whom perhaps her Ordener had fought, and by whom perhaps he had been slain. This idea kept coming back into her mind, in all sorts of painful guises. Entirely absorbed in her agonizing emotions, she scarcely heard the response which Hans of Iceland — the possible murderer of her Ordener — made in stumbling and embarrassed speech to the president’s inquiries. She only understood that the brigand declared himself to be the leader of the insurgents.

“Was it because of your own idea,” the president asked,

“or through the instigation of another, that you took command of the rebels?”

“It was not my own idea,” the brigand responded.

“Who led you to commit such a crime?”

“A man calling himself Hacket.”

“Who was this Hacket?”

“An agent for Schumacker, called also Count of Griffenfeld.”

“Schumacker,” said the president, addressing the old man, “do you know this Hacket?”

“You anticipate my own question, Count of Ahlefeld,” the old man responded; “I was about to ask you the same thing.”

“John Schumacker,” said the president, “your hatred makes you ill-advised. The court will give proper consideration to your method of conducting your defence.”

“Mr. Confidential Secretary,” said the bishop, turning toward the little man who seemed to be carrying out the functions of clerk and prosecuting attorney, “is this Hacket among your witnesses?”

“No, your reverence,” the secretary responded.

“Is it known what has become of him?”

“He has avoided arrest; he has disappeared.”

In making these replies, the confidential secretary seemed to have some trouble in keeping his voice firm.

“My opinion is that he has vanished into thin air,” said Schumacker.

“Mr. Secretary,” the bishop went on, “has any effort been made to follow up this man Hacket? Have you a description of him?”

Before the confidential secretary had time to respond, one of the prisoners got up, — a young miner, with a stern, proud face.

“It can easily be had,” he said in a loud voice. “That wretch, Hacket, Schumacker’s agent, is a short man with an open face, — open like one of the mouths of hell. Believe me, my lord bishop, his voice is very much like that of the gentle-

man writing at the table, whom your reverence calls, I believe, a confidential secretary; and if the hall were not so dark, and if Mr. Confidential Secretary had less hair to conceal his face, I should be willing to swear that there was something in his features closely resembling those of Hacket the traitor."

"Our brother speaks truly," the two prisoners sitting next the young miner exclaimed.

"Well, well!" Schumacker muttered, with an expression of triumph.

Meanwhile the secretary had made an involuntary movement, perhaps of fear, perhaps of indignation, at being compared to Hacket. The president, who himself seemed to be somewhat annoyed, spoke up quickly, in a loud voice, —

"Prisoners, do not forget that you should speak only in response to questions asked by the court, and above all do not insult ministers of justice by making unworthy comparisons."

"And yet, my lord president," said the bishop, "this has a bearing upon the question of identity. If the guilty man, Hacket, has any points of resemblance to the secretary, it will be worth while to know them."

"Hans of Iceland," the president interrupted, "you have been intimately associated with Hacket; tell us, for the satisfaction of the reverend bishop, if the fellow has any resemblance to our highly honored confidential secretary?"

"Not in the least, my lord," the giant responded without hesitation.

"You see, my lord bishop," the president added.

The bishop indicated acquiescence with a nod of the head; and the president, addressing himself to the next prisoner, went through the usual formula, —

"What is your name?"

"Wilfrid Kennybol, of the Kole mountains."

"Were you among the insurgents?"

"Yes, my lord; truth is more precious than life. I was taken in the infernal Black Column pass. I was leader of the mountaineers."

“What led you into the crime of rebellion?”

“Our brothers, the miners, complained of the royal guardianship; and that’s very easy to understand, is it not, your excellency? If you had only a mud hut and two rotten foxskins, you wouldn’t be sorry to have them for your own. The government would not listen to their petitions; then, my lord, they decided upon a revolt, and begged us to aid them. Such a little service as that is not refused between brothers who repeat the same prayers and keep the same holy days. That’s the whole story.”

“Did no one,” the president inquired, “stir up, encourage, and take charge of the insurrection?”

“Yes; a certain Master Hacket, who was always talking about the deliverance of some count imprisoned at Munckholm, whose envoy he claimed to be. We promised to do what he wanted, because an extra stroke at liberation would not cost us anything.”

“And was not this count called Schumacker Griffenfeld?”

“Just that, your excellency.”

“You never saw him?”

“No, my lord; but if he is the old man who reeled off so many names to you a little while ago, I cannot fail to conclude” —

“What?” the president interrupted.

“That he has a magnificent white beard, my lord; almost as fine as that of my sister Maase’s husband’s father, of Surb village, who has lived to be a hundred and twenty.”

The light was so dim in the hall that no one could see whether the president showed disappointment at the mountaineer’s artless response. He ordered the archers to unfold a number of flame-colored banners that had been brought into the court-room.

“Wilfrid Kennybol,” he said, “do you recognize these banners?”

“Yes, your excellency; they were given us by Hacket, in Count Schumacker’s name. The count also sent arms for the

miners; for we mountaineers, who live by the carbine and game-bag, had no need of any. Why, my lord, although you see me here, trussed up like a chicken ready for the roast, I have many a time, as I stood in the depths of one of our valleys, brought down an old eagle, flying so high that it seemed to be nothing but a swallow or a thrush."

"I call upon you to observe, my lord judges," the confidential secretary interposed, "that Schumacker, the accused, distributed weapons and banners through Hacket's agency."

"Kennybol," the president resumed, "have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing, your excellency, except that I do not deserve death. I have done nothing but render assistance in a fraternal way to the miners; and I am willing to swear to all your excellencies that, hunter though I am, no bullet from my carbine ever touched a stag belonging to the king."

Without responding to this plea, the president interrogated Kennybol's two companions. They were the leaders of the miners. The elder, who gave his name as Jonas, repeated in substance what Kennybol had said. The other—the young man who had discerned so much resemblance between the confidential secretary and the perfidious Hacket—said that he was called Norbith, and confessed proudly to the part he took in the revolt, but refused to make any revelations concerning Hacket and Schumacker. He declared that he had sworn to keep silence, and he could remember nothing but that oath. In vain the president interrogated him with threats and entreaties; the obstinate young man refused to yield. He did, however, give the assurance that he had not taken up arms in Schumacker's behalf, but simply because his old mother was cold and hungry. He did not deny that he was perhaps deserving of death; but he affirmed that injustice would be committed in condemning him, because in killing him, they would kill his poor mother, who merited no such fate.

When Norbith finished speaking, the confidential secretary

summed up in a few words the evidence, which up to this point bore so heavily upon the accused, and especially upon Schumacker. He read some of the seditious legends inscribed upon the banners, and pointed out how clearly the guilt of the ex-grand chancellor was indicated in the unanimous testimony of his accomplices, and even in the silence maintained by young Norbith in deference to a fanatical oath.

“In conclusion,” he added, “there remains but one prisoner to interrogate; and we have excellent reasons for thinking him to be the secret agent of the official who has so ineffectively maintained public tranquillity in Drontheimhus. This official, either by guilty connivance or fatal negligence, has facilitated the insurrection which will end in the destruction of all these poor wretches, and bring Schumacker again to the scaffold, from which he was once so generously spared through the clemency of the king.”

Ethel, whose fears for Ordener had been supplanted by no less painful trepidation concerning her father's fate, trembled at this sinister language, and a torrent of tears escaped from her eyes when she saw her father get up, and heard him say in a tranquil voice, —

“Chancellor Ahlefeld, I admire your foresight. Were you so thoughtful as to send for the executioner?”

The unfortunate girl believed in that moment that she had drunk the last drop of bitterness, but she was mistaken. The sixth prisoner arose. His bearing was proud and noble, as he brushed aside the hair that fell about his face, and responded in firm, clear tones to the question addressed to him by the president, —

“My name is Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorvick, Knight of Dannebrog.”

“The viceroy's son!” said the secretary with an exclamation of surprise.

“The viceroy's son!” voices repeated on every side, as if the hall were furnished with a thousand echoes.

The president sank back into his chair; and the other judges,

who until then had been sitting in perfect quietude upon the bench, now turned eagerly toward one another, like trees swayed from side to side by opposing winds. The excitement among the spectators was even more pronounced. They climbed up on the stone cornices and iron gratings, moved as it were by a common impulse; and the guards, forgetting to enforce order, mingled their own utterances of surprise in the general tumult.

What mind, however well accustomed to unexpected emotions, can conceive of what took place at that moment in Ethel's heart? Who could describe the extraordinary combination of agonizing joy and exquisite pain which she experienced, — that restless expectation, made up of both fear and hope, and yet which was neither? He was there in her presence, and knew not that she was near; her eyes sought his, and met with no response! It was her beloved Ordener, — her Ordener, whom she had believed to be dead, whom she knew to be lost to her, the friend who had deceived her, and whom she adored with undiminished adoration. He was there; yes, he was there. It was no dream by which she was deluded; oh, yes; it was really he, her Ordener, who, alas, had visited her much more often in dreams than in reality! Had he made his appearance amid these solemn surroundings as a guardian angel, or as a genius of destruction? Should she rest her hopes on him, or tremble before him? A thousand conjectures weighed upon her mind, and repressed its action, as an excess of fuel stifles flame. The whole sequence of ideas and sensations that we have indicated went through her heart like a lightning flash, at the instant when the viceroy's son uttered his name. She was the first to recognize him, and the others had not realized his identity before she swooned away.

She soon came back to consciousness once again, thanks to the solicitude of her mysterious companion. Her face was very pale as she opened her eyes, from which the tears had suddenly ceased to flow. She glanced eagerly at the young

man, who stood erect and calm amid the general tumult, — an eager, all-devouring glance; and even after the judges and the spectators had become quiet again, Ordener Guldenlew's name still rang in her ears. She noticed with profound anxiety that he wore one arm in a sling, and that his hands were manacled. She noticed that his cloak was torn in several places, and that his faithful sword no longer hung at his side. Nothing escaped her scrutiny, for a lover's eye is like a mother's. She brooded in spirit over the being whom she could not sustain in person; and it must be confessed, to the shame and the glory of love, that in the hall where her father and her father's persecutors confronted one another, Ethel saw no one but Ordener.

Silence had been restored little by little, and the president resumed his interrogation of the viceroy's son.

"My lord baron," he began in a wavering voice.

"I am not my lord baron here," Ordener interrupted gravely; "my name is Ordener Guldenlew, by the same token that he who was the Count of Griffenfeld is simply John Schumacker."

The president seemed to be stricken dumb for a moment, and then went on, —

"Very good; Ordener Guldenlew, doubtless it is because of an unhappy mischance that you have been brought here. The rebels took you prisoner in the course of your travels, and you were obliged to go with them, and for this reason you were found in their ranks."

"Honorable judges," said the secretary, rising to his feet, "the name alone of the son of Norway's viceroy is ample for his release. Baron Ordener Guldenlew cannot be a rebel. Our illustrious president has clearly explained how it came to pass that he was taken among the insurgents. The only error that the noble prisoner has committed lies in his not having sooner made known his name. We request that he be at once set at liberty; and we abandon the accusations made against him, regretting that he has been made to take his place on

the prisoners' bench, defiled by the criminal Schumacker and his accomplices."

"What is the meaning of this?" Ordener exclaimed.

"The confidential secretary withdraws the charges against you," said the president.

"He is in the wrong," Ordener responded in clear, ringing tones; "I am the only one here who should be accused, tried, and convicted,"—he paused a moment, and added with less assured earnestness,—"for I alone am guilty."

"You alone guilty!" the president exclaimed.

"You alone guilty!" the confidential secretary repeated.

Renewed manifestations of surprise were exhibited by the spectators. The unfortunate Ethel trembled; she did not dream that this declaration on the part of her lover would be her father's salvation. The possibility of Ordener's death filled her whole mind.

"Halberdiers, preserve order in court!" said the president, perhaps taking advantage of the momentary disturbance to collect his thoughts, and regain his presence of mind. "Ordener Guldenlew, explain yourself," he said finally.

The young man seemed to be absorbed in revery for a moment, then he sighed deeply, and spoke as follows, in an accent of calm resignation,—

"I'm very well aware that an infamous death awaits me; I know that my life might be fair and glorious; but God can read the truth at the bottom of my heart, and God alone. I am about to accomplish the foremost duty of my existence. I am going to sacrifice to it my blood, perhaps my honor; but I am confident that I shall die without remorse and without repentance. Do not be astonished at my words, honorable judges; the heart of man and human destiny contain mysteries that you cannot pass upon, and that are finally brought to judgment only in heaven. Listen to me, then, and decide my fate as conscience demands, when you have absolved these unfortunate men, and especially the unhappy Schumacker, who already has expiated in captivity more crimes than one man

could ever be able to commit. Yes; I am guilty, honorable judges, and I alone am guilty. Schumacker is innocent; these other poor wretches were only deluded. The author of the miners' rebellion was myself."

"You!" the president and the confidential secretary exclaimed in concert, and with astonishment on their faces.

"Yes, I; and do not interrupt me again, my lords. I am anxious to bring this matter to an end, for in accusing myself I clear these unfortunates. 'Twas I who stirred up the miners in Schumacker's name; 'twas I who had banners distributed among the rebels; 'twas I who sent them money and weapons as coming from the Munckholm prisoner. Hacket was my agent."

When the name Hacket was spoken, the confidential secretary made a gesture of stupefaction. Ordener went on, —

"I will not trespass on your time, my lords. I was taken in company with the miners, whom I had inspired to revolt. I alone planned everything; and now, render your verdict. If I have demonstrated my culpability, I have also proved Schumacker's innocence, and the innocence of the poor wretches whom you believe to be his accomplices."

As he spoke these words, the young man stood with uplifted eyes. Ethel sat like a statue, and could scarcely breathe; it seemed to her that in justifying her father, Ordener uttered his name with a good deal of bitterness. His speech astonished and alarmed her, and at the same time she could not comprehend its meaning. In all that she had seen and heard, only one thing was clear to her, and that was misery.

Something of the same feeling seemed to possess the president. He appeared to the lookers-on like a man who could not believe the testimony of his own senses. However, he once more began to question the viceroy's son, —

"If it is true that you are the sole author of this revolt, what object did you have in view?"

"I cannot say."

Ethel shuddered when she heard the president retort in an irritable way, —

“Did you not have an intrigue with Schumacker’s daughter?”

Manacled as he was, Ordener took a step toward the judges, and exclaimed in indignation, —

“Chancellor Ahlefeld, be content with the life I deliver up to you, and respect a noble and innocent girl. Do not attempt to dishonor her a second time.”

Poor Ethel, who felt the blood suffusing her face, did not understand at all the significance of the words “a second time,” upon which her defender laid so much emphasis; but the anger depicted in the countenance of the president showed plainly enough that he understood.

“Ordener Guldenlew, see that you do not forget the respect that you owe to the king’s justice and its supreme representatives. I reprimand you, in the name of the court. Once more, I call upon you to declare the object that you had in view when you committed the crime of which you accuse yourself.”

“I repeat that I cannot say.”

“Was it not to deliver Schumacker?” the secretary interposed. Ordener remained silent.

“You are on trial, and you must answer,” said the president. “It has been proved that you were in communication with Schumacker; and your avowal of culpability involves, rather than absolves, the Munckholm prisoner. You went often to Munckholm; and certainly your motive in making those visits was something more than ordinary curiosity, as this diamond buckle bears witness.”

The president took a gleaming buckle from his desk, where it had been lying, and showed it to Ordener.

“Do you recognize it as having belonged to you?”

“Yes. How did it happen?”—

“Well, one of the rebels, who was at the point of death, gave it into the possession of our confidential secretary, de-

claring that he had received it from you, in payment for taking you from Drontheim harbor to Munckholm fortress. Now, I ask of you, my lord judges, when such a reward is given to a humble boatman, does it not indicate the importance that the accused Ordener Guldenlew attached to his visit to the prison where Schumacker was in custody ? ”

“ Ah,” Kennybol exclaimed, “ what his excellency says is true. I recognize the buckle ; our poor brother, Guldon Stayper, told me the story.”

“ Silence,” said the president ; “ let Ordener Guldenlew make answer.”

“ I do not deny,” Ordener responded, “ that I was desirous of seeing Schumacker ; but the buckle has no significance. Visitors are not allowed to enter the fortress wearing diamonds ; the boatman who took me over bewailed his poverty, so I threw the buckle to him, since I could not keep it myself.”

“ Pardon me, your excellency,” the confidential secretary interposed, “ the regulations make an exception in favor of the viceroy’s son. You might, therefore,” —

“ I did not wish to give my name.”

“ Why ? ” the president inquired.

“ As to that, I cannot tell you.”

“ Your interviews with Schumacker and his daughter prove that the object of your plot was to secure their freedom.”

Schumacker, who up to this time had given no other evidence of attention than an occasional disdainful shrug, now arose.

“ To secure my freedom ! The object of this infernal conspiracy was to compromise and ruin me, and is so still. Can you believe that Ordener Guldenlew would have avowed his participation in the crime if he had not been taken among the insurgents ? Oh, I see that he has inherited his father’s hatred for me. And as to the interviews which he is supposed to have held with me and my daughter, this execrable Guldenlew knows full well that my daughter has inherited

my hatred for him, and for the whole race of Guldenlews and Ahlefelds !”

Ordener sighed deeply, while Ethel disavowed what her father had said under her breath, and the old man fell back upon the bench, still trembling with anger.

“The court will decide,” said the president.

Ordener, who had lowered his eyes in silence while Schumacker was speaking, now roused himself, —

“Oh, listen, noble judges. You are about to render a conscientious verdict; do not forget that Ordener Guldenlew alone is guilty, and that Schumacker is innocent. These other unfortunate fellows have been deceived by Hacket, who was my agent. I did all the rest.”

“His excellency speaks truly, my lord judges,” Kennybol interposed; “for ’twas he who took upon himself the responsibility of bringing the notorious Hans of Iceland, whose name I pray may not bring misfortune on me. I know that this young gentleman was even so bold as to go to Walderhog cave, to propose that he be our leader. He confided the object of his errand to me, at my brother Braal’s house, in Surb village. The rest of what the young gentleman says is also true. We were deceived by that cursed Hacket, and for that reason we do not deserve to be put to death.”

“Mr. Confidential Secretary,” said the president, “the evidence is all in. What are your conclusions ?”

The secretary arose, bowed several times to the court, and kept his hand for some moments in the folds of his lace scarf, without taking his eyes even for an instant from those of the president. Finally he uttered these words, in a solemn, lugubrious voice, —

“My lord president and honorable judges ! The charges are sustained. Ordener Guldenlew, who has tarnished forever the splendor of his glorious name, has succeeded in demonstrating his own guilt, without establishing the innocence of ex-chancellor Schumacker and his accomplices, — Hans of Iceland, Wilfrid Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith. I demand of

this court, in the name of justice, that the six prisoners be declared guilty of the crime of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree."

A confused murmur came from the crowd. The president was about to bring the sitting to an end, when the bishop requested a moment's attention.

"Learned judges, it is right that the defence should be allowed the last word. I could wish that they had a better advocate, for I am old and feeble, and what little strength I have comes from God. I am surprised at the severity of the demands made by the confidential secretary. Nothing that has been said here proves the guilt of my client, Schumacker. It has not been shown that he had any direct connection whatever with the miners' insurrection; and since my other client, Ordener Guldenlew, declares that he made free with Schumacker's name, and more than that, that he is the sole author of that abominable sedition, every presumption is entirely in favor of Schumacker. You ought, therefore, to acquit him. I recommend to your Christian forbearance these other prisoners, who have been led astray, like sheep from the shepherd—even young Ordener Guldenlew, who at least should have the credit for confessing his crime—a very meritorious action in the sight of heaven. Remember, honorable judges, that he is yet at an age when a man is likely to make a false step and even succumb, and that God will not refuse to uphold him, or lift him to his feet. Ordener Guldenlew carries barely a fourth of the burden of years that weigh so heavily upon my head. Put his youth and his inexperience in the scales of justice, and do not cut short so untimely the life that the Lord has but just given to him."

The old man ended his appeal, and took his place near Ordener, who was smiling. Then, at the invitation of the president, the judges arose and withdrew silently to the apartment where they held their deliberations. While these men in that awe-inspiring sanctuary were deciding the destiny of the six prisoners, the latter sat motionless upon the bench, between

two rows of halberdiers. Schumacker, with his head upon his breast, seemed to be given over to profound revery. The giant looked from right to left, with an expression of idiotic assurance. Jonas and Kennybol prayed in an undertone, with clasped hands, while their comrade, Norbith, stamped his foot at intervals, or shook his chains impetuously. Between him and the venerable bishop, who was reading the penitential psalms, Ordener sat with folded arms and uplifted eyes. Behind them the crowd had again broken into tumult at the withdrawal of the judges. Their thoughts and words and glances were wholly taken up with the famous Munckholm captive, the formidable Iceland demon, and especially the viceroy's son. The noise of their unrestrained exclamations of pity, merriment, and wonder, rose and fell like a flame undulating in the wind.

In this way several hours of inaction went by, — hours so long that it did not seem as if they could be contained in one night. From time to time glances were cast at the door leading to the inner chamber; but nothing could be seen but two soldiers, who paced back and forth with their gleaming partisans before the ominous threshold, like two speechless phantoms. Finally the torches and the lamps began to pale, and the white rays of dawn were beginning to find their way through the narrow windows of the court-room, when the door of destiny opened. The tumult gave place at once, as if by magic, to all-pervading silence; and nothing could be heard save the hurried respiration and abstracted movements of a crowd under the influence of suspense.

The judges emerged slowly from the inner chamber, with the president at their head, and resumed their places on the bench. The confidential secretary, who had seemed to be absorbed in his own reflections during their absence, bowed and said, —

“My lord president, what judgment has this court without appeal to render in the king's name? We are ready to receive it with entire reverence.”

The judge sitting at the president's right got up, holding a parchment in his hand, —

“His grace, our eminent president, fatigued by the extreme length of the sitting, has deigned to assign to us, chief syndic of Drontheimhus, and ordinarily the presiding officer of this honorable court, the duty of reading for him the judgment that has been rendered in the king's name. We are about to perform this honorable and painful duty, reminding those who are present of the propriety of keeping silence, out of respect to the infallibility of royal justice.”

Then the chief syndic's voice became solemn and impressive, and all hearts beat rapidly.

“In the name of our venerated master and legitimate lord, Christiern, the king, this is the decree that we, the judges of the high court of Drontheimhus, render in accordance with the dictates of conscience in regard to the case of John Schumacker, state prisoner; Wilfrid Kennybol, a denizen of the Kole mountains; Jonas, royal miner; Norbith, royal miner; Hans of Klipstadur, in Iceland; and Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorvick and Knight of Dannebrog,—all accused of the crime of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree, Hans of Iceland being further charged with murder, incendiarism, and brigandage: —

“First, John Schumacker is not guilty.

“Second, Wilfrid Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith are guilty; but the court grants them clemency because they were led astray.

“Third, Hans of Iceland is guilty of all the crimes of which he has been accused.

“Fourth, Ordener Guldenlew is guilty of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree.”

The judge paused for a moment, as if to take breath. Ordener watched him with an expression of unrestrained and celestial joy.

“John Schumacker,” the judge went on, “the court acquits you, and remands you to your prison.

“Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith, the court commutes the penalty which you have incurred to imprisonment for life, and a fine of one thousand royal crowns each.

“Hans of Klipstadur, assassin and incendiary, you will to-night be taken to the parade-ground at Munckholm, and be hanged by the neck until you are dead.

“Orderer Guldenlew, traitor, after being deprived of your titles in the presence of this court, you will be conducted to-night to the same place, with a torch in your hand, there to have your head severed from your body, your body burned, your ashes cast to the winds, and your head exposed on a wattle.

“Let all withdraw. Such is the judgment rendered by the king’s justice.”

Scarcely had the chief syndie finished his melancholy task when a loud cry rang through the apartment. It was a cry that terrified those who heard it even more than the horrible details of the death sentence; it was a cry that even brought pallor for a moment to the serene and radiant brow of Orderer the condemned.

CHAPTER XLIV.

'Twas misfortune that made them equal. — CHARLES NODIER.

THE die was cast; the event was about to be accomplished, or rather had already been accomplished. He had saved the father of her whom he loved, and he had saved her by giving her back to paternal watch-care. The young man's noble conspiracy in behalf of Schumacker's life had succeeded; the rest now was nothing; he had only to die.

Let those who believed him to be mad or guilty judge the generous Ordener now as he judged himself in his own soul, in a sort of holy rapture; for his only thought had been, when he joined the rebel ranks, that if he could not prevent the consummation of Schumacker's crime, he could at least forestall its punishment by taking it upon his own head.

"Alas!" he said to himself, "Schumacker is undoubtedly guilty, but he has been embittered by captivity and misfortune, and his crime is pardonable. He seeks to obtain his liberty, and he strives for it, even through rebellion. Moreover, what would become of my Ethel if her father were taken from her, if she lost him by the scaffold, if renewed opprobrium were to blight her life; what would become of her, without support and without succor, alone in her dungeon, or wandering in a world of enemies?"

This thought had determined his sacrifice, and he made his preparations for it with joy; for the greatest happiness that a lover can have is to sacrifice his life, not for the life, but for a smile or a tear from the being he loves. So he had been taken among the rebels, had been dragged before the judges who were to condemn Schumacker, had uttered his

generous falsehood, and had been sentenced. He was to die a cruel death under ignominious torture, and leave behind him a sullied name; but what did all this matter to the noble young man? He had saved Ethel's father.

He is sitting now in chains in a dripping dungeon, where light and air scarcely penetrate through the gloomy loopholes. Near him is the food which is to sustain the remainder of his existence, — a bit of black bread and a pitcher full of water. An iron collar is about his neck, iron bracelets hold his wrists, and iron bands are about his ankles. Every hour as it flits by takes away more from his life than a year does from ordinary mortals. He is lost in ecstatic dreams.

“Perhaps the memory of my existence will not perish utterly with me, at least from one human heart; perhaps she will deign to drop a tear as my blood flows; perhaps she will now and then give a regretful thought to him who devoted his life to her; perhaps, in maiden reveries, she will sometimes be conscious of the vague image of her friend! Who knows, after all, what is beyond death? Who knows if souls delivered from their material prison may not sometimes be able to return and watch the souls that love them, hold mysterious communion with those tender companions yet held captive, and bring to them in secret something of angelic virtue, something of heavenly joy?

An undercurrent of embittering thought mingled with these consoling meditations. The hatred that Schumacker had manifested toward him, even at the very moment of his sacrifice, weighed upon his heart. The agonizing cry that he had heard when his death sentence was delivered shook him deeply; for he was the only one in that audience who recognized the voice, and understood the suffering it expressed. And was he never to see his Ethel again? Was he to pass his last moments in the very prison where she was in durance without being able once more to feel the touch of her soft hand, to hear once more the tender accents of her voice, before he went out to die?

He had abandoned himself to the influences of the vague and melancholy revery that is to the mind what sleep is to the body, when the harsh noise of old and rusty bolts struck rudely upon his ear, which had already, after a fashion, been attuned to the finer harmonies of the sphere whither he was about to take flight. The heavy iron door of his dungeon opened upon its creaking hinges. The young prisoner arose tranquilly and almost joyfully; for he thought that the executioner had come in search of him, and he had already cast life from him, like the cloak which he was trampling under his feet.

His expectations were not realized. A slender figure clad in white appeared, like a luminous vision, on the dungeon threshold. Ordener could not believe his eyes, and asked himself if he were already in heaven. 'Twas she — 'twas his Ethel. The young girl fell into his manacled arms, and rained tears upon his hands, wiping them away with the long black thick tresses of her hair. She kissed the iron bonds that held him, and wounded her tender lips against the cruel irons. She did not speak; but her whole heart seemed to be ready to come forth at the first word that should pass amid her sobbing.

Ordener experienced the most celestial bliss that he had ever known since his life began. He held his Ethel softly to his breast, and the united forces of earth and hell would not have been able at that moment to tear her from the two arms that were clasped about her. The anticipation of approaching death gave a certain solemnity to his rapture, and he held to his Ethel as if he had already taken possession of her for eternity. He did not ask this angelic visitor how she had been able to make her way to him; she was there — could he think of anything else. Moreover, he felt no surprise. He did not ask himself how this young, proscribed, weak and unaided girl had been able, in spite of triple doors of iron and triple ranks of guards, to escape from her own prison and gain access to her lover's. It was all simple enough to him; he car-

ried within himself evidence to prove that love can do all things.

What are mere words worth when one can speak with another, soul to soul? Why may not the body listen in silence to the mysterious language of the heart? Both were silent, because only by silence could they express the emotions that filled their minds. Finally, however, the young girl lifted her head from the young man's agitated breast.

"Ordener," she said, "I have come to save you." This cheering message she uttered with agonizing sorrow. Ordener shook his head and smiled.

"Save me, Ethel! You deceive yourself; flight is impossible."

"Alas, I know that too well! The castle is filled with soldiers, and every door leading to this place is guarded by archers and jailers who never sleep. But," she added uneasily, "I bring you another means of safety."

"Ah, well, 'tis but a vain hope. Do not delude yourself with false anticipations, Ethel; in a few hours a stroke of the axe will dissipate them all too cruelly."

"Do not say that, Ordener; you will not die! Oh, take that horrible thought away from me, or rather, yes, bring it before me in all its horror, that I may have the strength to accomplish your salvation and my sacrifice."

There was an indefinable meaning in the young girl's tones. Ordener looked at her tenderly.

"Your sacrifice! What do you mean?"

She hid her face in her hands and sobbed, exclaiming in a stifled voice, "O God!"

The moment of weakness quickly passed. She stood erect, with shining eyes, and a smile on her lips. She was as beautiful as an angel taking flight from hell to heaven.

"Listen, dear Ordener; the scaffold will never be built for you. To make your life secure, it is enough that you promise to marry Ulrica Ahlefeld."

"Ulrica Ahlefeld! That name on your lips, dear Ethel!"

"Do not interrupt me," she went on, with the calmness of a martyr facing the last stroke of torture; "I come here at the request of the Countess of Ahlefeld. They promise to secure the king's pardon for you, if in return your hand shall be pledged to the grand chancellor's daughter. I have come here to ask you to take oath that you will marry Ulrica and live for her. They chose me as the messenger, because they thought my voice might have some influence."

"Ethel," said the condemned man in cold and measured speech, "farewell; when you leave this dungeon, tell them to send the executioner."

She stood a moment before him pale and trembling, then her knees gave way, and she sank upon the stones, clasping her hands.

"What have I done to him?" she murmured distractedly. Ordener was silent, with eyes on the floor. "My lord," she said, dragging herself to his feet, "you make no reply! Are you not willing to speak to me? Then, there is nothing left for me but to die."

"Ethel, you do not love me," said the young man, the tears falling from his eyes.

"O God," the poor young girl exclaimed, clasping the prisoner's knees, "I do not love you! You say that I no longer love you, my Ordener. Is it really so that you can say that?"

"You no longer love me since you despise me."

He repented of the cruel speech even as he uttered it; for Ethel's tone was agonizing, as she threw her adoring arms around his neck, exclaiming in a voice stifled with tears, —

"Forgive me, my beloved Ordener, forgive me, as I forgive you. I, despise you — great God, are you not my treasure, my pride, my idolatry? Tell me, have my words ever expressed anything but profound love, fervent admiration, for you? Alas, your harsh words have wounded me deeply; for I came here to save you, my adored Ordener, by sacrificing my whole life to yours!"

“Ah, yes,” the young man responded gently, kissing the tears from Ethel’s face; “but did you not show little esteem for me by proposing that I should purchase the right to live by abandoning my Ethel, ignobly forgetting my vows, and sacrificing my love? — my love,” he added, gazing earnestly at Ethel, “for which to-day I pour out my blood.”

“Listen to me once more, dear Ordener,” Ethel responded, after a prolonged moan; “do not accuse me so hastily. Perhaps I have more fortitude than ordinarily belongs to feeble woman. From our donjon height we can look into the parade ground, and see them building the scaffold destined for you. Ordener, you do not realize the horrible agony of witnessing the preparations for the death of one whose life is bound up in yours! The Countess of Ahlefeld, with whom I was when I heard your sentence delivered, sought me out in the donjon, to which I had returned with my father. She asked me if I wanted to save you, and offered this odious alternative. Dear Ordener, I was asked to renounce you, to lose you forever, to cut off my only hope of happiness, to give you to another, to sacrifice in another’s behalf the felicity that might have been mine, — to do this, or deliver you to judgment. I had my choice between my own unhappiness and your death; I did not hesitate.”

“Neither do I, Ethel,” he said, respectfully kissing her angelic hand. “You would not have come to me to offer me life and the hand of Ulrica Ahlefeld if you knew how it came to pass that I am to die.”

“Why, what mystery” —

“Let me have one secret from you, my beloved Ethel. I wish to die without letting you know whether my death is a matter for gratitude or hatred.”

“You wish to die? you really wish to die? O God, then it is true — the scaffold is rising at this moment, and no human power can deliver my Ordener from his fate! Tell me, my beloved Ordener, cast one look at your slave and well-wisher, and promise me to listen without anger. Are you

wholly sure, — answer your Ethel, as you would to Heaven, — are you wholly sure that you could not lead a life of happiness with this other woman, Ulrica Ahlefeld? Are you wholly sure of it, Ordener? She is perhaps — nay, undoubtedly she is — beautiful, gentle, virtuous; she is far more worthy than the one for whom you perish. Don't turn your head away, dear Ordener, dear friend. You are too noble and too young to mount a scaffold! Ah, well, you will live with her in some brilliant city, where you will think no more of this funereal donjon; your days will glide peacefully along, and bring you no tidings of me. I consent; and you shall drive my image from your heart and from your memory, Ordener; only live, and leave me here alone; it is for me to die, and, believe me, when I know you are in the arms of another, you will not need to be anxious about me; I shall not suffer long."

She paused, her voice drowned in tears; and yet one could read in her despairing glance, her agonizing desire to secure the object she had in view, even though it involved her own death.

"Ethel, talk no more to me of this," Ordener said. "Let no other names pass between us now but yours and mine."

"And so," she responded, "alas, alas! You prefer, then, to die?"

"It must be so. I go to the scaffold with joy, going for you; I should go with horror to the altar for any other woman. Talk no more of it; you wound me and offend me."

"He is going to die," she kept whispering, amid her tears; "O God, he is going to die an infamous death!"

"Believe me, Ethel," the condemned man responded with a smile, "there is less dishonor in the death that awaits me than in such a life as you propose."

At that moment his glance turned from his weeping Ethel, and lighted upon an old man, wearing priestly garments, standing in the shadow under the low archway of the door.

"What do you want?" he asked quickly.

"My lord, I have come here as the envoy of the Countess

of Ahlefeld. You did not perceive my approach, and I was waiting until your eye fell upon me."

In fact, Ordener had seen no one but Ethel; and the latter, when she saw Ordener, had forgotten her companion.

"I am the minister charged with" — said the old man.

"I understand," said Ordener. "I am ready."

"God also is ready," said the minister drawing nearer, "to receive you, my son."

"Reverend sir," Ordener responded, "your face is not unknown to me. I have seen you somewhere before."

"I also recognize you, my son," said the minister, bending his head; "it was at Vygla tower. We both made manifest on that day how little certainty there is in human words. You promised me pardon for a dozen unfortunate convicts, and I did not believe in your promise, not being able to guess that you were what you are, the viceroy's son; and you, my lord, who counted upon your power and your rank, in giving me that assurance" —

Ordener completed the sentence that Athanasius Munder dared not finish. "I cannot to-day obtain pardon for any one, not even for myself. You are right, reverend sir. I had too little respect for the future; I have been punished, by discovering that there is a power superior to my own."

"God is all-powerful," said the minister, bowing his head; then he lifted his benevolent eyes to Ordener, and added, "God is good."

Ordener seemed to be preoccupied for a few moments, and then exclaimed, —

"Listen, reverend sir; I wish to keep the promise that I made to you at Vygla tower. When I am dead, go to my father at Bergen, to the viceroy of Norway, and say to him that the last boon asked of him by his son is the pardon of your twelve convicts. He will grant the request, I feel very sure."

The face of the venerable Athanasius was wet with tears.

"My son," he said, "your heart must be filled with noble

thoughts, to enable you courageously to reject pardon for yourself, and at the same time generously to solicit pardon for others; for I heard your refusal, and although I could not but condemn a dangerous excess of human passion, I was profoundly touched by it. Now, I say to myself, *Unde scelus?* How does it happen that a man who has attained so nearly the standard of ideal justice should be stained with the crime for which he has been condemned?"

"My father, I have not told this angel, and I cannot tell you — only believe that the cause of my condemnation was not a crime."

"What? Explain yourself, my son."

"Do not press me," the young man responded firmly. "Let me carry the secret of my death to the tomb."

"It cannot be that this young man is guilty," murmured the minister.

Then he took a black crucifix from his breast, and placed it on a sort of altar, roughly fashioned from a slab of granite, leaning against the dripping prison wall. Near the crucifix he placed and lighted a little oil lamp, which he had brought with him, and also put there an open Bible.

"My son, pray and meditate. I will come back in a few hours." Then turning to Ethel, who had maintained an abstracted silence during the interview between the two men, Athanasius added, "Now we must leave the prisoner. Time passes rapidly."

She rose to her feet with an expression of radiant tranquillity; there was something divine in the light that rested upon her countenance.

"Reverend sir," she said, "I cannot go with you yet. You must first unite Ethel Schumacker to her husband Ordener Guldenlew." She looked at Ordener, and added, "If you were yet in a position of power and eminence, and had your freedom, Ordener, I should separate my fatal destiny from yours, and weep; but now that you can no longer suffer anything from the contagion of my misfortune; now that you are,

like me, a captive, dishonored and oppressed ; now that you are about to die — I come to you, hoping that, at least, Ordener, my lord, you will deign to permit one who may not be the companion of your life to be the companion of your death ; for you love me enough, do you not, never to have doubted, for a single instant, that when you die, I shall die too ? ” The condemned man fell at her feet, and kissed the hem of her gown. “ You, reverend sir,” she went on, “ you will take the place of parents and family ; this dungeon shall be the temple, and this stone the altar. Here is my ring ; we are on our knees before God and before you. Give us your blessing, and recite the holy formula that will unite Ethel Schumacker to Ordener Guldenlew her lord.”

They were both kneeling together before the minister, who looked at them with surprise and pity.

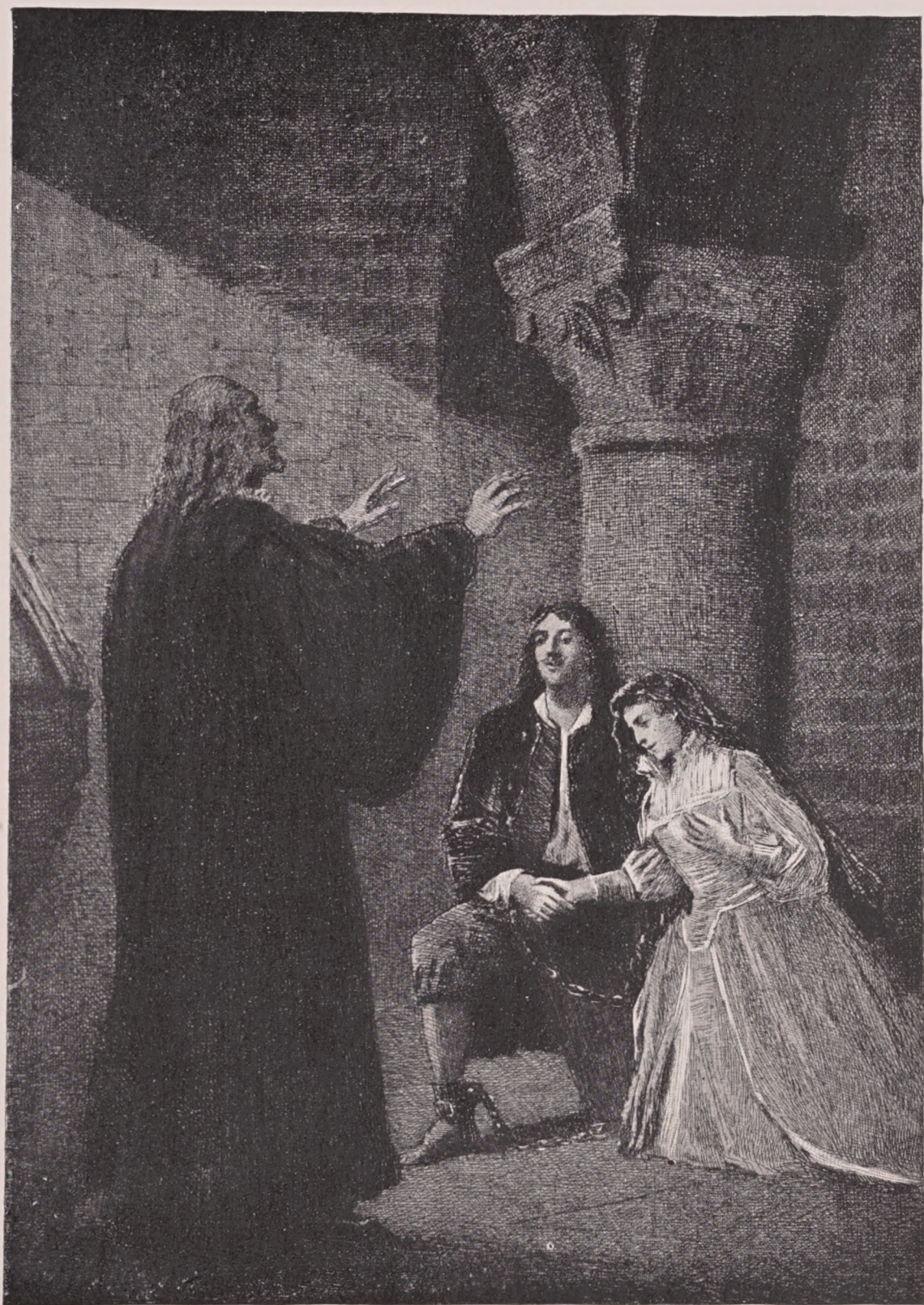
“ What is this, my children ? What are you doing ? ”

“ Father,” said the young girl, “ time flies. God and death await us.”

There are times in life when one encounters the irresistible influence of a will to which one succumbs without question, as if it were something more than human. The priest lifted up his eyes and sighed.

“ May Heaven pardon me if my consent is culpable ! You love one another, you have but a little time left to love one another upon earth ; I do not believe that I shall be false to my sacred duties by setting the seal of the church upon your devotion.”

The touching and impressive ceremony was completed. They both arose at the priest’s final benediction, as husband and wife. The face of the condemned man shone with a melancholy joy. It seemed as if his realization of the bitterness of death had come upon him just as he was beginning to understand the felicity there might be in living. His companion’s expression was sublime in its grandeur and simplicity. Ethel manifested in her bearing the modesty of a maiden and the dignity of the young wife.



"THE TOUCHING AND IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY WAS COMPLETED."

“Listen to me, my Ordener,” she said ; “is it not true that we are happy to die now, since we were not to be reunited in living ? You do not know what I am going to do, my friend. I shall stand at the donjon windows, where I can see you mount the scaffold, and our two souls will fly away together into heaven. If I expire before the axe has fallen, I shall wait for you ; for we are husband and wife, my beloved Ordener, and this night the sepulchre shall be our nuptial bed.”

He pressed her to his swollen heart, and all he could say was to give utterance to the idea that filled his whole being,—

“Ethel, you are really mine !”

“My children,” said the chaplain tenderly, “say farewell. It is time.”

“Alas !” exclaimed Ethel. Then the strength of her angelic purpose came back to her, and she fell at the condemned man’s feet. “Farewell, Ordener, farewell, beloved ; give me your blessing, my lord.”

The prisoner acceded to this, then he turned to salute the venerable Athanasius Munder. The old man was also kneeling before him.

“What do you wish of me, my father ?” he asked in surprise.

“Your benediction, my son,” said the old man, looking at him in perfect humility.

“May Heaven bless you, and shower upon you all the happiness that your prayers seek to call down upon your fellow-creatures,” Ordener responded solemnly and with emotion.

The last adieus and the last kisses passed between the lovers under the sepulchral archway, the ruthless bolts were thrust noisily into place, and the iron door separated the youthful husband and wife, who awaited death as the means that should enable them to keep their tryst in eternity.

CHAPTER XLV.

To him who will deliver Luis Perez to me, alive or dead, I will give a thousand crowns. — CALDERON: *Luis Perez of Galicia*.

“BARON VÆTHAÜN, colonel of Munckholm arquebusiers, who was it among the soldiers fighting under your orders at Black Column pass, who made Hans of Iceland prisoner? Name him to the court, that he may receive the thousand royal crowns promised for that achievement.”

Thus spoke the president of the tribunal to the colonel of arquebusiers. The court was still in session; for in accordance with the ancient Norwegian custom, judges who gave sentence without appeal must remain upon the bench until the sentence had been carried into execution. Before them stood the giant, who had been brought thither with the rope around his neck, which in a few hours was to be his only visible means of support.

The colonel, who had been sitting near the secretary's table, now got up. He saluted the court and the bishop, who had resumed his place under the canopy. “Honorable judges, the soldier who took Hans of Iceland is in your presence. His name is Toric Belfast, and he is second arquebusier in my regiment.”

“Let him come forward, then, and receive the promised reward,” said the president.

A young soldier, in the uniform of the Munckholm arquebusiers, presented himself.

“You are Toric Belfast?” the president inquired.

“Yes, your grace.”

“It was you who took Hans of Iceland prisoner?”

"Yes, with the aid of St. Beelzebub, if it pleases your excellency."

A heavy bag was brought to the president, who pointed to the shackled giant, and asked, —

"You recognize this man for the notorious Hans of Iceland, do you?"

"I know pretty Cattie's face better than I do Hans of Iceland's; but I am ready to swear, by the glory of St. Belphegor, that if Hans of Iceland exists at all, 'tis in the form of that great demon."

"Come hither, Toric Belfast," the president said. "Here are the thousand crowns that the chief syndic promised."

The soldier was hurrying forward, in response to the president's command, when some one in the crowd called out, —

"Munckholm arquebusier, you are not the one who took Hans of Iceland!"

"By all the jovial devils," the soldier exclaimed, turning around, "all the property that I have is my pipe and this present moment; but I promise to give ten thousand gold crowns to the man who said that, if he can prove what he says!" Folding his arms, he cast a defiant glance at the spectators. "Well, let the one who spoke show himself."

"'Twas I," said a little man, thrusting the crowd aside to make his way into the enclosure.

This person was wrapped up in a Greenland costume of rush matting and sealskin, which fell around him like the conical roof of a hut. He wore a black beard; and thick hair of the same color, falling over his reddish eyebrows, partly hid his face, but what could be seen of it was hideous. His arms and his hands were not visible.

"Ah, 'twas you!" said the soldier, with a shout of laughter; "and who was it, then, my fine fellow, who in your opinion had the honor of capturing that diabolical giant?"

The little man shook his head, and said, with a wicked leer, —

"I'm the one!"

At that moment Baron Vøethaün believed that he recognized in this extraordinary man the mysterious being who at Skongen had given him information concerning the arrival of the rebels; Chancellor Ahlefeld thought he saw before him the occupant of Arbar ruins; and the confidential secretary fancied that they had to do with a certain Oëlmœ peasant, who wore a similar matting, and who had told him where to find Hans of Iceland's retreat. But as they were separated from one another, they could not make any mutual comparison of impressions which, when brought to the test of changes in costume and features, would speedily have been effaced.

"So you're the one!" the soldier responded ironically. "If it were not for your Greenland seal outfit, I should be tempted to recognize, from the look you give me, the droll dwarf who tried to get up a quarrel with me in much the same way at the Spladgest, about a fortnight ago — 'twas the day when they brought in the body of Gill Stadt, the miner."

"Gill Stadt!" the little man interrupted with a shudder.

"Yes, Gill Stadt," the soldier repeated indifferently; "the discarded lover of a girl who was the mistress of one of our comrades, and for whom he killed himself, like a fool."

"Wasn't the body of an officer of your regiment also at the Spladgest?" asked the little man, in a dull, hollow voice.

"Exactly; I shall remember that day as long as I live. I stayed in the Spladgest so long that I missed tattoo, and I came near getting my discharge when I went back to the fort. The officer was Captain Dispolsen."

"These two fellows are abusing the patience of the court," said the confidential secretary. "We beseech the lord president to cut short this useless discussion."

"By my Cattie's honor, I ask nothing better," said Toric Belfast, "provided that your excellency award to me the thousand crowns promised for Hans's head; for I'm the one that took him prisoner."

"You lie!" the little man shouted.

"It's lucky for you, you rogue," said the soldier, putting

his hand to his sword, "that we are in the presence of the court, where even a Munckholm arquebusier must be as devoid of spurs as a worn-out fighting-cock."

"The reward belongs to me," said the little man coolly; "for without me Hans of Iceland would not have been taken."

The angry soldier swore that 'twas he who had taken Hans of Iceland, just as the brigand was beginning to open his eyes, where he had fallen, in the thick of the fight.

"Well," said his adversary, "it may be that you took him, but I knocked him down. If it hadn't been for me, you would not have made him prisoner, so the thousand crowns are mine."

"'Tis false," the soldier responded; "'twas not you who brought him down; 'twas a demon in beasts' skins."

"I did it!"

"No, no!"

The president commanded both to be silent, and then once more asked of Colonel Voethaün if Toric Belfast had brought Hans of Iceland to him as a prisoner. Upon an affirmative response, he declared that the reward belonged to the soldier. The little man ground his teeth, and the arquebusier stretched out his hand eagerly to receive the bag.

"One moment!" the little man exclaimed. "My lord president, this sum, according to the chief syndic's edict, belongs only to him who delivers up Hans of Iceland."

"Well?" said the judges.

"That man is not Hans of Iceland," said the little man, turning toward the giant.

A murmur of astonishment ran through the assembly. The president and the confidential secretary moved uneasily in their seats.

"No," the little man went on earnestly, "the money does not belong to the accursed Munckholm arquebusier, for this man is not Hans of Iceland."

"Halberdiers," said the president, "take this noisy fellow away; he has lost his reason."

"Permit me, honorable president," said the bishop in a loud, clear voice, "to call attention to the fact that, in refusing to listen to this man, the last hope of salvation may be taken away from under the feet of the condemned man here present. I demand, on the contrary, that the inquiry be continued."

"Reverend bishop, the court will give you satisfaction," the president responded; and addressing himself to the giant he said, "You have claimed to be Hans of Iceland; do you confirm that claim in the presence of death?"

"I confirm it; I am Hans of Iceland," the condemned man responded.

"You hear, my lord bishop?"

"You lie, Kole mountaineer; you lie!" the little man exclaimed, before the president had finished speaking. "Do not persist in carrying a name that will crush you; remember that it has already been a curse to you."

"I am Hans of Klipstadur, in Iceland," the giant repeated, with his eyes fixed upon the confidential secretary.

The little man drew near the Munckholm soldier, who, like every one else, was watching the scene with eager curiosity.

"Kole mountaineer, they say that Hans of Iceland drinks human blood. If you are he, drink away; here's some for you!"

The words had scarcely crossed his lips, before he had thrown back his rush cloak, plunged a dagger into the arquebusier's heart, and thrown the body at the giant's feet.

A shout of horror and alarm went up, and the soldiers guarding the giant fell back. With the rapidity of a thunderbolt, the little man leaped upon the unprotected mountaineer, and with another dagger-thrust felled him across the soldier's body. Then, snatching off the rush matting and his black wig and beard, he revealed a sinewy body, clad in beasts' skins, and a face which excited even more horror among the beholders than the bloody dagger, which he held aloft, stained with the double murder.

“Ho, judges! Where is Hans of Iceland?”

“Guards, seize this monster!” exclaimed the terrified president.

Hans threw his dagger into the middle of the enclosure, and said, “’Tis useless to me now, since there are no more Munckholm soldiers here.”

With these words, he surrendered without resistance to the halberdiers and archers, who had surrounded him with preparations as elaborate as if they were going to besiege a town. They chained the monster to the prisoners’ bench; and his two victims were carried away on a litter, the mountaineer still breathing.

It is impossible to depict the different manifestations of terror, astonishment, and wrath which in the course of this horrible scene had agitated the people, the guards, and the judges. When the brigand had taken his place, with perfect calmness, on the prisoners’ bench, every other emotion gave place to curiosity so profound that perfect silence followed.

“Honorable judges,” said the bishop, rising to his feet.

“Bishop of Drontheim,” the brigand interrupted, “I am Hans of Iceland; do not take the trouble to defend me.”

“Noble president,” said the confidential secretary as he arose.

“Secretary, I am Hans of Iceland,” said the monster, cutting short what the other was about to say. “Do not waste your time with any accusations against me.”

Then, with his feet in blood, he cast a bold and fiery glance at the court, the archers, and the spectators; and all upon whom he looked seemed to shudder with terror under the scrutiny of that isolated, disarmed, and fettered man.

“Listen, judges, and expect no long orations from me. I am the Klipstadur demon. My mother was the volcanic isle of old Iceland. Once she was a mountain; but she was crushed under a giant, who fell upon her crest from the skies. There is no need that I should speak to you of myself; I am descended from Ingolphus, the Exterminator, and I have his

spirit within me. I have committed more murders and lighted more fires than you have pronounced iniquitous judgments in all your lives. I have secrets in common with Chancellor Ahlefeld. It would give me unspeakable delight to drink all the blood that runs in your veins. My nature is to hate men, and my mission to destroy them. Colonel of Munckholm arquebusiers, I am the one who told you that the miners were going through Black Column pass, feeling sure that you would kill a great many men in those ravines. I'm the one that crushed one of your battalions with rocks; I was avenging my son. Now, judges, my son is dead, and I come here to seek death. The soul of Ingolphus weighs heavily upon me, because I carry it alone, and cannot transmit it to any heir. I am tired of life, since it can no longer be an example and a lesson for my successor. I have drunk blood enough; my thirst is all gone. Here I am; you can now drink mine."

He was silent, and many voices repeated after him his frightful words in undertones.

"My son," said the bishop, "what was your object in committing so many crimes?"

"By my faith," said the brigand with a laugh, "I swear to you, reverend sir, that I wasn't trying to enrich myself after the fashion of your colleague, the bishop of Borglum.¹ There was something in me that pushed me on."

"God is not always present with those who purport to be his ministers," the venerable saint humbly responded. "You seek to insult me, but I wish to defend you."

"Your reverence is wasting time. Go and ask your other colleague, the bishop of Scalholt in Iceland. By Ingolphus, 'tis a strange thing that two bishops should have the care of my destiny, one at the cradle, and the other at the tomb. Bishop, you are an old crazy-head."

"My son, do you believe in God?"

¹ Some chroniclers affirm that in 1525 a bishop of Borglum made himself notorious by acts of brigandage. They declare that the pirates who infested the Norway coast were in his pay.

"Why not? I prefer to believe in God, so that I may be able to blaspheme."

"Pause, unhappy wretch; you are about to die, and you do not kiss the feet of the Christ!"

"If I did," said Hans of Iceland with a shrug, "it would be after the fashion of the Roll gendarme, who upset the king when kissing his foot." The bishop sat down, overcome with emotion. "Well, judges," Hans of Iceland went on, "what are you waiting for? If I had been in your place, and you in mine, I would not have kept you waiting so long for your death sentence."

The court withdrew. After brief deliberation they returned; and the president read in a loud voice the sentence which, in the customary formula, condemned Hans of Iceland to be hanged by the neck until he should be dead.

"That's first-rate," said the brigand. "Chancellor Ahlefeld, I know enough about your doings to have the same fate dealt out to you; but go on living, since you bring evil upon men. There's one good thing, I'm sure now of not going to Nysthiem."¹

The confidential secretary ordered the guards who were to take him away to put him in the Lion of Schleswig donjon, while a dungeon was made ready for him in the quarters of the Munckholm arquebusiers pending his execution.

"In the quarters of the Munckholm arquebusiers!" the monster repeated, with a roar of joy.

¹ According to popular belief, Nysthiem was the hell reserved for those who died of disease or old age.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Meanwhile, Ponce de Leon's body, which had been lying near the fountain, was being disfigured by the sun, and the Moors of Alpuxares took charge of it, and carried it away to Grenada. — E. H.: *The Captive of Ochali*.

IN the meantime, before the dawning of the day which had been largely taken up with the events already described, at the very hour when Ordener's sentence was being pronounced at Munckholm, the new Spladgest keeper at Drontheim, Oglypiglap, — former assistant and now the successor of Benignus Spiagudry, — had been rudely awakened by a thunderous knock upon the outer door. He got up reluctantly, took his copper lamp, and with the dim light blinding his heavy eyes, made his way, with many oaths at the dampness of the mortuary chamber, to find out who it was that had so roughly disturbed his slumbers.

Several fishermen from Sparbo lake had brought a litter, and on it a dead body, lying amid rushes and algæ, and taken by them from the waters of the lake. They deposited their burden inside the charnel-house; and Oglypiglap gave them a receipt for the corpse, so that they might claim the reward. Left alone in the Spladgest, he began to undress the body, which was remarkable for its length and thinness. The first thing that met his eyes when he lifted the cloth that was wrapped around it was an enormous wig.

“Why, surely,” he said to himself, “this peculiar-looking wig has been through my hands before; it belonged to that young French gallant. But,” he went on, as he continued his task, “here are the top-boots that were worn by the poor postilion Cranmer, who was crushed by his horses; and — what the devil does this mean? — the full suit of black worn by

Professor Syngramtax, the old scholar, who drowned himself not long ago. Who can this newcomer be, dressed in the leavings of all my old acquaintances ? ”

He held the lamp to the dead man's face, but without avail ; the features were badly decomposed, and had lost their form and color. He fumbled in the coat pockets, and drew out several old parchments soaked with water and stained with mud. He rubbed them energetically with his leather apron, and succeeded in making out on one of them the following disconnected and half-obliterated phrases : —

“ * * * Rudbeck. Saxon, the grammarian. Arngrim, bishop of Holum. * * * There are only two counties in Norway, Larvig and Jarlsberg, and one barony. * * * There are no silver mines at Kongsberg ; loadstone and asbestos at Sundmoër ; amethyst at Guldbranshal ; chalcedony, agate, jasper in the Faroë islands. * * * At Noukahiva, in times of famine, the men eat their wives and children. * * * Thormodus Thorfœus ; Isleif, bishop of Scalholt, first Icelandic historian. * * * Mercury played chess with Luna, and won the seventy-second part of a day. * * * Mælstrom, a gulf. * * * *Hirundo*, *hirudo*. * * * Cicero means niggard ; glory. * * * Froda the scholar. * * * Odin consulted the head of Mimer, the sage. * * * (Mahomet and his pigeon, Sertorius and his she-dog). * * * The more sun * * * less gypsum to be found ” —

“ I cannot believe my eyes ! ” Oglypiglap exclaimed, letting the parchment fall ; “ ’tis the writing of my old master, Benignus Spiagudry ! ”

Then he examined the corpse anew, and recognized the long hands, the thin hair, and the general appearance of the poor fellow's body.

“ They were not wrong,” he said to himself with a shake of the head, “ in bringing charges of sacrilege and necromancy against him. The devil carried him off, and drowned him in Sparbo. Well, who can say what's going to happen ? Who would ever have thought that Dr. Spiagudry, after so long holding the position of host in this dead man's tavern, should at last come here on a long journey to be a guest himself ? ”

The philosophical little Laplander was lifting the body to

put it on one of the six stone slabs, when he saw something hanging down heavily from a leather band fastened about the hapless Spiagudry's neck.

"That's probably the stone the demon fastened to him when he threw him in the lake," Oglypiglap muttered.

He was mistaken; it was a small iron casket; and after wiping it carefully, and looking at it closely, he perceived a large clasp shaped like a shield.

"There's some deviltry in this box, I've no doubt," he said to himself. "This man was guilty of sacrilege and sorcery. I'll take the box to the bishop; perhaps there's a demon inside."

He put the corpse on the slab, unfastened the box, and hastened with it to the bishop's palace, whispering prayers to himself all the way, that no harm might come to him from so ill-omened a burden.

CHAPTER XLVII.

What fierce spirit is it tears thee thus?
Show me the horrid tenant of thy heart.

MATURIN.

HANS OF ICELAND and Schumacker are in the same room in the Schleswig donjon. The acquitted ex-chancellor walks slowly back and forth, his eyes filled with bitter tears. The condemned brigand, surrounded by guards, laughs at his chains. The two prisoners look at one another silently for a long time. There seems to be a feeling of sympathy between them in their mutual recognition of the fact that each is at enmity with mankind.

"Who are you?" the ex-chancellor finally asks the brigand.

"I will tell you my name," the other responds, "to drive you away. I am Hans of Iceland."

"Take my hand!" Schumacker says, drawing near to him.

"Do you want me to eat it?"

"Hans of Iceland," Schumacker replies, "I love you, because you hate men."

"That's why I hate you."

"Listen; I hate men, like you, because I have done good to them, and they have rendered evil for good."

"You don't hate them as I do; I hate them because they have done good to me, and I have repaid them with evil."

Schumacker shuddered at the monster's expression. His attempts to repress his natural feelings were in vain; his soul had no sympathy with such a sentiment as that.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "I execrate men, because they are cheats, ingrates, cruel. To them I owe all the misfortunes of my life."

"I have fared better; I owe them all the happiness that has come to me."

"What happiness?"

"The happiness of feeling living flesh quiver under my teeth, and smoking blood warming my parched throat; the delight of smashing live creatures against pointed rocks, and hearing the victims' cries mingled with the noise of breaking bones. That's the pleasure men have made for me."

Schumacker recoiled with dismay from the monster whom he had approached with something like pride in their mutual resemblance. Overcome with shame, he hid his venerable face in his hands; for the tears of indignation that now filled his eyes were not inspired by his hatred of the human race, but by his hatred of himself. His great and noble heart was horrified when he saw the sentiment that he had so long nourished toward mankind now reflected in Hans of Iceland's heart, as in a frightful mirror.

"Well," said the monster with a laugh, "enemy to men, do you dare vaunt yourself as being one like me?"

"O God," the old man exclaimed with a shudder, "rather than hate as you do, I would prefer to love!"

The guards came to put the monster in more secure quarters. Schumacker remained alone in the donjon in meditation, but he was no longer at enmity with men.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

. . . When the wicked man spies me,
Wilt thou let me fall, oh, Lord, into his hands?
'Twas he who made thy paths rough beneath my feet.
Punish me not, I pray, for my crime is his crime.

A. DE VIGNY.

THE fatal hour had come; the sun was just sinking below the horizon. The guards had been doubled everywhere in Munckholm fortress; silent and grim-looking sentinels paced to and fro in front of every door. The clamor of the city was intensified as it reached those sombre towers where extraordinary agitation prevailed. From every court-yard came the mournful sound of muffled drums; the cannon on the ramparts thundered at intervals; the massive bell on the donjon swung slowly, with prolonged, funereal reverberation; and from every landing-place in the harbor, boats loaded with people were hurrying toward the terror-inspiring castle rock.

A scaffold draped in black, surrounded by an impatient and restless throng, stood on the parade-ground, protected by a square of soldiers. On the scaffold, a man dressed in red serge walked back and forth, sometimes leaning on an axe which he held in his hand, and then arranging a block and hurdle, which had been placed on the platform. Near by a funeral pile had been prepared, with torches in front of it already lighted. Between the scaffold and the funeral pile a staff was planted in the ground with this inscription fastened to it: "Ordener Guldenlew, traitor." From the parade-ground, a great black flag could be seen flying from the top of the Schleswig donjon.

Meanwhile, Ordener had been taken before the tribunal, which was still in session in the court-room. The bishop alone was absent; his efforts in behalf of the defence were no longer needed. The viceroy's son was dressed in black, and he wore the Dannebrog collar about his neck. His countenance was pale, but haughty. He was alone; for he had been brought forth from his dungeon before the chaplain, Athanasius Munder, had returned.

Ordener had already in spirit gone through the sacrifice; and yet, as Ethel's husband, he felt some bitterness of regret, and perhaps would have chosen for his wedding-night some other occasion than that of his descent into the tomb. He had prayed and meditated in his cell, and now he had come to the end of prayers and meditation. He felt within him the strength given by God and by love.

The crowd, manifesting more emotion than the condemned man, watched him with eager attention. The splendor of his rank and the horror of his destiny awakened envy and pity. Of those who were there to witness his punishment, not one could understand the motive for his crime. There is a strange instinct in men which impels them to attend scenes of torture as well as those of pleasure. They seek with horrible eagerness to understand the thoughts which the prospect of sudden death inspires, as if they believed some revelation from heaven or hell would be manifested at this solemn moment in the eyes of the miserable victim; as if they could see the shadow of the death angel's wings cast upon his head; and as if they would know what remains to man after hope is gone.

This being, full of strength and health, who is about to die; who breathes and lives, and who in a moment will cease to move and breathe and live; surrounded by creatures like himself, whom he has never harmed, who pity him, and yet cannot give him succor; this unhappy wretch, dying, yet not moribund, crushed by a power both material and invisible; this life, which the state did not give, but which it ostenta-

tiously takes away, — all this imposing ceremony of judicial murder has a tremendous effect on the imagination. We are all condemned to death, under an indefinite reprieve; and the unfortunate one who knows precisely the hour when his respite is to end is to us an object of strange and melancholy curiosity.

It will be remembered that before mounting the scaffold, Ordener was to be taken before the court, to be deprived of his titles and his honors. The disturbance caused among the spectators by his arrival had scarcely given place to silence, when the president called for the book of heraldry of the two kingdoms, and the statutes of the Order of Dannebrog. Then, commanding the condemned man to kneel on the ground, he urged the spectators to observe order, and opened the book of the knights of Dannebrog, and began to read in a loud and solemn voice, —

“‘Christiern, by the grace and the mercy of the Almighty, King of Denmark and Norway, of the Vandals and the Goths, Duke of Schleswig, Holstein, Stormaria, and Dytmaarse, Count of Oldenburg and Delmenhurst, hereby makes known that, having re-established at the suggestion of our grand chancellor the Count of Griffenfeld,’” — the president hurried so rapidly over this name that it could scarcely be heard, — “‘the royal Order of Dannebrog, founded by our illustrious ancestor, St. Waldemar,

“‘And since this venerable Order has been created in memory of the standard of Dannebrog, sent by Heaven to our blessed kingdom,

“‘It would be contrary to the divine institution of that Order, if any knight should with impunity be false to the dictates of honor, or the sacred laws of Church and State;

“‘We, therefore, decree, bowing before God, that whoever among the knights of this Order shall have given his soul to evil, by any felony or treason, shall be publicly reprimanded in court, and degraded forever from the rank of knight in our royal Order of Dannebrog.’

“Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorvick and Knight of Dannebrog,” said the president, closing the book, “you have been found guilty of high treason, a crime for which your head is to be severed from your body, your body is to be burned, and your ashes are to be thrown to the winds. Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, you have made yourself unworthy to hold rank among the knights of Dannebrog. Bow your head, for I am about to proclaim your degradation publicly, in the name of the king.”

The president placed his hand on the statute book, and was about to utter the dreaded formula, while Ordener remained calm and motionless, when a side door opened at the right of the court-room. An ecclesiastical usher appeared, announcing his reverence, the Bishop of Drontheimhus, who immediately followed. The bishop came hurriedly into the hall, leaning upon the arm of another ecclesiastic.

“Wait, my lord president,” he exclaimed, with an energy in striking contrast with his bodily weakness; “wait! Thank Heaven, I have arrived in time!”

The spectators gave eager attention, foreseeing some unusual event. The president turned toward the bishop in an irritated way, —

“His reverence will permit me to call his attention to the fact that his presence is useless here. The court is about to pronounce degradation upon the prisoner, who is close upon the moment of his final punishment.”

“Do not condemn a man who is innocent in the sight of God,” said the bishop. “The prisoner has done no wrong.”

The exclamation of astonishment that went up from the assembled crowd did not drown the outcry of fear uttered by the president and the confidential secretary.

“Yes, tremble, judges,” the bishop went on, before the president had time to recover his presence of mind, “tremble, for you were about to shed innocent blood.”

While the president was recovering his composure, Ordener arose in consternation. The noble young man feared that his

generous ruse had been discovered, and that they had found proofs of Schumacker's guilt.

"My lord bishop," said the president, "in this affair the responsibility for the crime seems to elude us by being transferred from one person to another. Do not be deceived by vain appearances. If Ordener Guldenlew is innocent, pray tell us who is the guilty one?"

"Your grace shall hear," the bishop responded, as he held up before the court an iron casket, which an attendant had been carrying. "My noble lords, you have been groping in darkness; this casket holds the miraculous light which is to dissipate your ignorance."

The president, the confidential secretary, and Ordener were greatly impressed at the aspect of the mysterious box. The bishop went on, —

"Noble judges, listen. To-day, as we were about to enter the episcopal palace, to obtain some repose from the fatigues of the night, and to pray for the condemned, this sealed iron box was given into our possession. We were told that the Spladgest keeper had brought it to our palace this morning, with the request that it be placed in our hands, and the warning that it probably contained some satanic mystery, since it had been found on the body of Benignus Spiagudry, the sacrilegist, who had been found drowned in Sparbo."

Ordener gave even closer attention, and all present kept strict silence. The president and the secretary bowed their heads, as if they were about to undergo sentence. Both seemed to have lost entirely their natural astuteness and audacity. There is always a time in a wicked man's life when his powers desert him.

"After having blessed this casket," continued the bishop, "we broke the seal, which bore, as you can still see, the former and abrogated arms of Griffenfeld. We found, in truth, a satanic secret inside. You shall judge of it, my venerable lords. Give us your whole attention, for it is a question that involves human blood, and Heaven will weigh every drop."

Then opening the ominous casket, he took out a parchment, on the back of which was inscribed the following attestation :

"I, Blaxtham Cumbysulsum, doctor, being at the point of death, place in the hands of Captain Dispolsen, the agent at Copenhagen of the former Count of Griffenfeld, the enclosed document, which I declare to be written wholly in the handwriting of Turiaf Musdœmon, servitor to the chancellor, the Count of Ahlefeld, that the aforesaid captain may make such use of it as he may see fit; and I pray God to pardon all my sins. At Copenhagen, the eleventh day of the month of January, sixteen hundred and ninety-nine.

CUMBYSULSUM."

The confidential secretary was seized with a convulsive trembling. He tried to speak. Meanwhile, the bishop handed the parchment to the pale and agitated president.

"What is this?" exclaimed the latter, unfolding the document. "'Memorandum for the noble, the Count of Ahlefeld, with regard to measures for ridding himself of Schumacker, by judicial process'! Reverend bishop, I swear to you" — and the parchment fell from the president's hands.

"Read, read, my lord," the bishop commanded. "I do not doubt that your unworthy servitor has taken advantage of your authority, as he has of that of the unfortunate Schumacker. Behold, however, the results of your relentless hatred for your fallen predecessor. One of your retainers has sought to ruin him, in your name, hoping thereby to win favor with your grace."

The president became calm when he realized that, in spite of full knowledge of the contents of the casket, the bishop's suspicions had not lighted upon him. Ordener also experienced great relief. He began to see that the innocence of Ethel's father was about to be demonstrated, along with his own. He felt profound astonishment at the extraordinary decree of destiny, which had led him to go in pursuit of a formidable brigand to recover a casket, which his old guide Benignus Spiagudry bore upon his person, so that he was

really following the object of which he was in search. He reflected also upon the momentous lesson that the progress of events set forth, in making the marvellous casket, first a source of peril, and then a talisman for his salvation.

Recovering his composure, the president, with indications of anger in which his audience participated, read a long note, in which Musdæmon explained in detail the abominable plot that we have seen him working out in the course of this narrative. Several times the confidential secretary made as if he would get up and defend himself, but each time the manifestations of public wrath thrust him back into his seat. Finally the reading of the odious document came to an end, amid a murmur of general horror.

“Halberdiers, seize that man!” said the president, pointing to the confidential secretary.

The miserable fellow, helpless and speechless, was dragged from his seat and thrown upon the prisoners’ bench, amid the jeers of the spectators.

“My lords,” said the bishop, “tremble and rejoice. The truth which has just been revealed to you will be still further confirmed by the chaplain of the royal prisons, our honored brother, Athanasius Munder, here present.”

In fact, it was Athanasius Munder who had accompanied the bishop. He bowed to his ecclesiastical superior, and to the court; and then, at a sign from the president, he spoke as follows, —

“What I am about to say is the truth; may Heaven punish me if I utter here a single word with any other intention than that of favoring justice! After what I witnessed this morning in the dungeon of the viceroy’s son, I came to the conclusion in my own mind that the young man was not guilty, although your lordships had condemned him on his own confession. Now, I was called a few hours ago to administer the last consolations of religion to the unfortunate mountaineer who was so cruelly struck down in your presence, and whom you had condemned, my honorable lords, supposing

him to be Hans of Iceland. Here is what the dying man said to me: 'I am not Hans of Iceland; I have been punished for taking that name. The one who paid me for playing that part is the confidential secretary to the grand chancellor's office; his name is Musdæmon, and he managed the whole revolt, under the name of Hacket. I believe he is the only guilty one concerned in the matter.' Then he asked for my blessing, and begged me to come here with all possible haste, and report what he had said to the tribunal. God is witness to what I have told you. Would that I might save the blood of the innocent, and not cause that of the guilty to be shed!" He ended his speech, and again bowed to the bishop and the judges.

"Your grace perceives," said the bishop to the president, "that one of my clients was not wrong in detecting a resemblance between the supposed Hacket and your confidential secretary."

"Turiaf Musdæmon," said the president to the prisoner, "what have you to say in your own defence?"

Musdæmon shot a look at his master that inspired him with terror. He had recovered all his assurance. After a moment's silence, he responded, —

"Nothing, my lord."

"Do you, then," the president went on in a weak and trembling voice, "confess yourself guilty of the crime that has been imputed to you? Do you avow yourself to be the author of a conspiracy directed against the state and against the person known as Schumacker?"

"Yes, my lord," Musdæmon responded.

"My lord president," said the bishop, rising to his feet, "in order that there may be no uncertainty whatever in regard to this affair, let your grace demand of the accused, whether or not he had any accomplices."

"Any accomplices!" repeated Musdæmon. He seemed to meditate for a moment, and the president's countenance depicted horrible anxiety. "No, my lord bishop," he said

finally. The president met his glance with a look of relief. "No; I had no accomplices," Musdæmon repeated with still greater emphasis. "I devised the whole plot out of devotion to my master, who knew nothing about it, that I might rid him of his enemy, Schumacker."

Another look was exchanged between the president and the prisoner.

"Your grace must see," said the bishop," that if Musdæmon had no accomplices, Baron Ordener Guldenlew cannot be guilty."

"If he is not guilty, reverend bishop, why did he confess himself to be so?"

"My lord president, why did the mountaineer persist so obstinately in saying that he was Hans of Iceland, at the peril of his neck? God alone knows the motives that dwell within the heart."

"My lords," said Ordener, "I will tell you, now that the true culprit has been discovered. The simple fact is, that I accused myself falsely to save Schumacker, the former chancellor, whose death would have left his daughter without a protector."

The president bit his lips.

"We demand of the court," said the bishop, "that our client, Ordener, be found innocent."

The president responded with a gesture of acquiescence; and at the request of the chief syndic they completed their examination of the mysterious casket, which contained nothing more, except Schumacker's records of title, and several letters from the Munckholm prisoner to Captain Dispolsen — letters that showed no evidences of guilt, in spite of their bitterness, and that could terrify no one but Chancellor Ahlefeld.

The court withdrew for a brief period of deliberation, and while the eager crowd assembled on the parade-ground were waiting with impatience the appearance of the viceroy's son, and while the executioner walked unconcernedly back and

forth upon the scaffold, the president, in a scarcely audible voice, pronounced the sentence which condemned Turiaf Musdæmon to death, and rehabilitated Ordener Guldenlew, by restoring him to all his honors, titles, and privileges.

CHAPTER XLIX.

What will you take for your carcass, you rascal?

On my honor, I wouldn't give you even an obolus for it.

St. Michael to Satan: A Mystery.

ALL that remained of the regiment of Munckholm arquebusiers had returned to its former quarters, in a structure standing by itself in the middle of a large square court-yard inside the ramparts. As night approached, the doors were barred according to custom, and all the soldiers were inside, except the sentinels, who were on duty on the towers and in front of the military prison back of the barracks. This prison, which was the strongest and most carefully guarded of all the Munckholm strongholds, contained the two condemned men who were to be hanged the next morning, — Hans of Iceland and Musdæmon.

Hans of Iceland is alone in his cell. He is stretched out on the ground in his chains, with his head lying on a stone. A dim light falls upon him from a rectangular barred opening in the heavy oaken door, which separates his dungeon from the adjoining room, where he can hear his guards laughing and blaspheming, as they noisily pass the bottle from one to another, and throw dice, with a drumhead for a table. The monster writhes silently in the darkness, folds and unfolds his arms, draws up his knees and stretches them out again, and gnashes at his shackles with his teeth. All at once he lifts up his voice and calls aloud. A turnkey looks through the barred opening.

“What do you want?” he says to the brigand.

“Comrade,” says Hans, sitting up, “I am cold. My stone bed is hard and damp. Give me a bundle of straw to sleep on, and a little fire to warm me.”

"'Tis only right," the turnkey responds, "to give a little comfort to a poor devil who is going to be hanged, even if that devil be the one from Iceland. I'll go and bring you what you ask for. Have you any money?"

"No," the brigand replies.

"What, you, the most notorious robber in Norway, with not even a few trifling gold ducats in your purse?"

"No," the brigand replies.

"A few little royal crowns?"

"No, I tell you!"

"Not even a handful of paltry ascalins?"

"No, no, nothing,—not enough to buy a rat's skin or a man's soul."

"That's different," said the turnkey, shaking his head. "You are wrong to complain; your cell is not as cold as the one that you'll sleep in to-morrow, and you won't notice how hard the bed is, I dare swear."

Saying this, the turnkey went away, while the monster hurled a curse after him and continued to roll about in his chains. Now and then the links gave forth a feeble sound, as if they were being slowly pulled apart by violent and repeated wrenches. The oaken door opened, and a tall man dressed in red serge and carrying a dark lantern entered the dungeon, accompanied by the turnkey who had refused the prisoner's request. The brigand lay quite still.

"Hans of Iceland," said the man in red, "I am Nychol Orugix, the executioner of Drontheimhus. To-morrow, at daybreak, I am going to have the honor of hanging your excellency by the neck, to a fine new gallows on the public square in Drontheim."

"Are you quite sure that you will hang me?" the brigand responded.

"I wish I was quite as sure of climbing straight up to heaven on Jacob's ladder as you are of mounting to the gibbet to-morrow by Nychol Orugix's ladder."

"Is that so?" said the monster with a malicious glance.

"Once more, let me inform you, my lord brigand, that I am the provincial executioner."

"If I were not what I am, I would like to be you," the brigand responded.

"I can't say as much as that," responded the executioner; then, rubbing his hands together, with an expression of flattered vanity, he added, "my friend, you're right; ours is a noble trade. Ah, my hand knows the weight of a man's head!"

"Did you ever drink any blood?" the brigand demanded.

"No; but I have often put men to the question."

"Did you ever devour the entrails of a little living child?"

"No; but I have made bones crack between the trestle planks, I have twisted limbs on the spokes of a wheel, I have broken steel saws on denuded skulls, I have torn quivering flesh with red-hot iron pincers, I have scorched the blood in opened veins by pouring in melted lead and boiling oil."

"Yes," said the brigand thoughtfully; "you have had your pleasures too."

"Well," the executioner went on, "although you are Hans of Iceland, I believe that more souls have taken their flight under my hands than under yours, without counting what you will give up to-morrow."

"You suppose too much. Do you really think, Drontheimhus executioner, that you can drive the spirit of Ingolphus from Hans of Iceland's body and not have him carry off yours?"

"Ah, well; we shall see about that to-morrow," the hangman responded with an outburst of laughter.

"We shall see," said the brigand.

"Well," said the executioner, "I have not come here to talk about your spirit, but only about your body. Listen; your carcass belongs to me, by right, after you are dead; but the law gives you the privilege of selling it to me. Tell me, then, how much you want for it."

"How much I want for my body?" said the brigand.

"Yes; and deal honestly with me."

"See here, comrade," said Hans of Iceland, addressing the turnkey, "how much will you take for a bundle of straw and a little fire?"

"Two gold ducats," the turnkey responded after a moment's thought.

"Well," said the brigand to the executioner, "you shall give me two gold ducats for my body."

"Two gold ducats!" the hangman exclaimed. "That is horribly dear. Two gold ducats for a paltry carcass! No, of a truth, I'll give no such price."

"Then you won't have it at all!" the monster responded tranquilly.

"You'll be thrown into a ditch, if you don't go to decorate the royal museum at Copenhagen or the collection of curiosities at Bergen."

"What's that to me?"

"Long after your death, they'll come in crowds to look at your skeleton, and say, 'These are the remains of the famous Hans of Iceland!' They will polish your bones with care, fasten them together with copper wire, and place them under a big glass case, which they will dust off faithfully every day. Instead of these honors, think of what awaits you if you will not sell your body to me. You'll be left to rot on a dung-heap, and you will be the prey of snakes and vultures."

"Very good; I shall be as well off as the living, who are all the time being pecked at by the small and devoured by the great."

"Two gold ducats," the hangman repeated, between his teeth; "what an exorbitant demand! If you don't come down on your price, my dear Hans of Iceland, we won't be able to make a trade."

"This is the first and probably the last trade in my life; I mean to get a good bargain."

"Remember, I can make you repent of your obstinacy. You'll be in my power to-morrow."

“Do you think so?”

The words were uttered with an expression that escaped the executioner.

“Yes; and there is a knack in tying a slipnoose — still, if you’re reasonable, I’ll hang you better.”

“It will make mighty little difference to me what you do with my neck to-morrow,” the monster responded with an ironical grin.

“Well, now, won’t you take two royal crowns? What do you want of so much money?”

“Ask your comrade,” said the brigand, with a nod at the turnkey; “he asks two gold ducats for a little straw and fire.”

“That’s it,” said the executioner, in indignant tones to the turnkey; “by St. Joseph’s saw, it’s against all decency to make any one pay for fire and straw with their weight in gold. Two ducats!”

“I’m treating him well in not asking for four,” the turnkey responded sullenly. “Why, look here, master Nychol, you’re as much of an Arab as the figure 2, to refuse a poor prisoner two gold ducats for his carcass, when you know that you can sell it to some wiseacre for at least twenty.”

“I never gave more than fifteen ascalins for a body,” said the executioner.

“Yes,” the turnkey responded, “a dirty thief or a wretched Jew may not be worth more than that, but every one knows that you can get what you like for Hans of Iceland’s body.”

“What have you got to do with it?” said Orugix roughly, while Hans of Iceland shook his head; “do I mix myself up with your little thieveries, — the clothes and jewels that you steal from prisoners, the dirty water that you put in their soup, and the torments you make them endure to get money from them? No; I won’t give two gold ducats.”

“No straw and no fire for less than two gold ducats,” the obstinate turnkey responded.

“No corpse for less than two gold ducats,” the imperturbable brigand repeated.

"Well," said the hangman, after a moment's silence, stamping on the ground, "time flies. I have business elsewhere."

He took a leather bag from his jacket, and opened it slowly and with evident regret.

"There, cursed Iceland demon, there are your two ducats. I'm sure Satan wouldn't give any more for your soul than I am giving for your body."

The brigand picked up the two gold-pieces. The turnkey immediately put out his hand to take them.

"One moment, comrade; bring me first what I asked for."

The turnkey went out, and came back a moment later, bringing a bundle of fresh straw and a brazier filled with glowing coals, which he put down near the prisoner.

"That's right," said the brigand, handing him the two ducats; "I'll warm myself to-night. One word more," he added in a sinister tone; "this dungeon adjoins the quarters of the Munckholm arquebusiers, does it not?"

"That is so," the turnkey replied.

"And which way is the wind?"

"From the east, I think."

"All right," responded the brigand.

"What is it you're after, comrade?" the turnkey inquired.

"Oh, nothing," responded the brigand.

"Farewell, comrade, till to-morrow morning."

"Yes, till to-morrow," was the brigand's reply.

And the noise made by the closing of the heavy door prevented the hangman and his companion from hearing the savage, jeering chuckle which accompanied those words.

CHAPTER L.

Do you expect to finish up with another transgression?—ALEX. SOUMET.

LET us now take a look into the other dungeon in the military prison, adjoining the arquebusiers' quarters, — the dungeon containing our old acquaintance, Turiaf Musdæmon.

It may perhaps have seemed surprising that Musdæmon, with all his subtle ingenuity and unlimited cowardice, should have so openly revealed to the court the crime for which he had been condemned, and should have sought with so much generosity to have concealed the participation in it of his ungrateful master, Chancellor Ahlefeld. The surprise would be uncalled for, however; Musdæmon was as he had always been. His manifestations of generous good faith were perhaps the greatest proof of finesse that he had ever given. When he saw his whole infernal plot so inopportunately and unmistakably brought to light, he was for a moment stunned and horrified. This first impression passed away, his exceptional mental sagacity made him realize that, if he were powerless to bring his destined victims to ruin, he ought none the less to think of saving himself. Two courses lay open to him, — he might throw the whole blame upon the Count of Ahlefeld, who had so ignobly abandoned him, or take upon himself the responsibility for the crime which he had divided with the count. A common mind would have seized upon the first alternative; Musdæmon chose the second. The chancellor was the chancellor, and moreover there was nothing directly compromising to him in the papers which had borne so heavily upon the confidential secretary. Then, he had exchanged several meaning glances with Musdæmon, and nothing more

was necessary to decide the latter to let himself be condemned, in the certainty that the Count of Ahlefeld would facilitate his escape, — less perhaps out of gratitude for services previously rendered, than out of need of future assistance.

He was therefore pacing to and fro in his prison, which was but dimly illuminated by a sepulchral lamp, not doubting that the door would be opened to him during the night. He looked closely at the construction of the old stone dungeon, built by ancient kings whose names are scarcely remembered in history, and was surprised to see a wooden floor, over which his footsteps echoed sonorously, as if there were some subterranean cavity underneath. He noticed a large iron ring, fastened in the keystone of the ogive ceiling, with a piece of old broken rope hanging to it. Time passed on, and he listened impatiently to the donjon clock, as it slowly tolled forth the hours, with solemn reverberations, through the silence of the night.

Finally there was a sound of footsteps outside the door of his dungeon, and his heart beat with hope. The enormous key turned with a creaking sound, the padlock rattled against the wood, the chains fell, and when the door opened his face became radiant with joy. It was the man in scarlet clothes, whom we just saw in Hans's dungeon. He carried a coil of hempen rope under his arm, and was accompanied by four halberdiers, dressed in black, and armed with swords and partisans. Musdæmon still wore his magisterial robe and wig. The costume seemed to have its effect upon the man in red. He saluted, as if he were accustomed to greet it with respect.

“My lord,” he said to the prisoner with some hesitation, “is it with your excellency that we have to do?”

“Yes, yes,” Musdæmon responded hastily, confirmed in his hope of escape by this preliminary politeness, and not taking note of the sanguinary color of the garb of the man who addressed him.

“Your name,” said the man, with his eyes fixed upon a parchment which he had unfolded, “is Turiaf Musdæmon.”

"Exactly. You come, my friends, from the grand chancellor?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Do not forget, when you have finished with your task, to express to his grace my profound gratitude."

The man in the red clothes looked at him with astonishment.

"Your — gratitude!"

"Yes, certainly, my friend; for it will probably be impossible for me to express it in person very shortly."

"Probably," the man responded with an ironical expression.

"And you must feel," Musdæmon went on, "that I ought not to show myself ungrateful for such a service."

"By the cross of the penitent thief," the other exclaimed with a hearty laugh, "one would say, to listen to you, that the chancellor had some other fate in store for your excellency."

"Undoubtedly he is simply treating me at this moment with exact justice."

"Exact is good — but if you acknowledge that it is justice, this is the first time I have had any such experience in the twenty-six years that I have exercised my calling. Well, my lord, time passes while we talk; are you ready?"

"Why, of course," said Musdæmon joyfully, taking a step toward the door.

"Wait, wait a moment," the man in red exclaimed, stooping down to put his coil of rope on the floor.

"What are you going to do with all that rope?" said Musdæmon, coming to a halt.

"Your excellency is right in asking that question, for to tell the truth I have much more than I need; but at the beginning of the trial I thought there would be a good many condemned." With these words he proceeded to uncoil the rope.

"Well, let us hasten," said Musdæmon.

“Your excellency is in a great hurry. Have you no supplication to make?”

“None, except what I have already spoken of, — my gratitude to his grace. For God’s sake, let’s hasten,” Musdæmon added; “I am impatient to get out of this place. Have we any great distance to go?”

“Any distance!” the man in scarlet clothes responded, standing up and measuring off several arms’ lengths of rope. “The distance that we have to go will not very greatly fatigue your excellency, for we shall reach our destination without stepping foot outside of this place.”

“What do you mean?” said Musdæmon trembling.

“What do you mean yourself?” the other demanded.

“O God!” said Musdæmon, turning pale, as if he beheld a spectre; “who are you?”

“I am the hangman.”

The miserable fellow trembled like a dead leaf shaken in the wind.

“Did you not come to help me get away?” he murmured in a stifled tone.

“Why, yes, indeed,” the hangman exclaimed, with an outburst of laughter; “to help you get away into the spirit-land, where I can assure you they will never be able to fetch you back.”

“Mercy! Have pity on me! Mercy!” shrieked Musdæmon, as he fell face downward on the floor.

“On my word,” said the hangman coldly, “this is the first time that any such request has ever been made of me. Do you take me for the king?”

The unhappy wretch dragged himself along on his knees, staining his robe with dust, striking his forehead, which had been so radiant a moment before, upon the planking, and embraced the hangman’s feet, with half-audible moans and sobs.

“There, enough of that!” said the hangman. “Never before this did I see the black robe humble itself before my red jacket.” He thrust the suppliant aside with his foot.

“Comrade, pray to God and the saints; they will listen to you better than I.”

Musdæmon remained upon his knees, his face hidden in his hands, weeping bitterly. Meanwhile the hangman rose upon tiptoe, and put the rope through the ring in the arched ceiling. He let it fall down to the floor, then made it fast with a double turn, and tied a slipnoose at the lower end.

“There we are,” he said to the prisoner, when these suggestive preparations were ended; “have you disposed of your life with as much dexterity?”

“No,” said Musdæmon getting to his feet — “no, it cannot be! You are laboring under some horrible mistake. Chancellor Ahlefeld is not infamous enough — I am too necessary to him. ’Tis impossible that you should have been sent to me. Let me go, lest you incur the chancellor’s anger.”

“Didn’t you tell me,” the hangman responded, “that you are Turiaf Musdæmon?”

“No,” said the prisoner suddenly, after a moment’s silence, — “no, my name is not Musdæmon; my name is Turiaf Orugix.”

“Orugix!” exclaimed the executioner — “Orugix!” He quickly snatched off the wig which shaded the prisoner’s face, and uttered a cry of stupefaction, “My brother!”

“Your brother!” the prisoner responded, with mingled emotions of astonishment, shame, and joy; “are you” —

“Nychol Orugix, executioner of Drontheimhus, at your service, brother Turiaf.”

The condemned man threw himself upon the executioner’s neck calling him his brother, his dear brother. This exhibition of fraternal regard would not have touched the heart of any one who happened to be a witness of it. Turiaf lavished a thousand caresses upon Nychol, with an affected and shame-faced smile, to which Nychol responded with sombre and embarrassed glances. It was like a tiger fawning upon an elephant, at the moment when the great beast’s heavy foot presses upon his victim’s quivering flank.

“What happiness, brother Nychol! I am very glad to see you again.”

“And I am very sorry for you, brother Turiaf.”

The condemned man made as if he did not understand, and went on, in a trembling voice, —

“You have a wife and children, I suppose? You will take me to see my amiable sister, and allow me to embrace my charming nephews.”

“By the demon’s sign of the cross!” the hangman muttered.

“I would be a second father to them. Listen, brother; I am influential, I have resources.”

“I know you have,” the brother responded in a sinister tone; “just now, it will be well for you to think only of what influence you have with the saints.”

“O God!” exclaimed the condemned man, every trace of hope disappearing from his countenance; “what does this mean, dear Nychol? I am saved, since I have found you. Remember that we came from the same womb, that we were nourished at the same breast, that we engaged in the same childish sports — remember, Nychol, that you are my brother!”

“You never thought of it till this hour came,” Nychol responded sullenly.

“But I cannot die by my brother’s hand!”

“’Tis your fault, Turiaf. You shattered my career, prevented me from being royal executioner at Copenhagen, and had me cast aside into this miserable country, as provincial hangman. If you had not been so unbrotherly to me, you would not be complaining of what goes against you so much to-day. I shouldn’t be in Drontheimhus, and somebody else would have been attending to your affair. We’ve talked enough, brother; you’ll have to die.”

Death is hideous to the wicked, for the same cause that it is beautiful to the good, — each is about to put aside the aspect of humanity; but the upright man is set free from his

body as from a prison, while the sinner is snatched from it, out of a stronghold. At the last moment hell comes as a revelation to a perverse soul, which has been dreaming of annihilation. It knocks uneasily at the sombre door of death, and something more than oblivion responds.

The prisoner rolled upon the floor, wringing his hands, with complaints more pitiful than the eternal lamentations of the damned.

"God have mercy! Holy angels in heaven, if you exist, have compassion on me! Nychol, dear Nychol, in the name of our mother — oh, let me live!"

"I can't," said the executioner, showing his parchment; "the order is absolute."

"That order does not concern me," the desperate prisoner stammered; "it relates to a certain Musdæmon, and not to me; I am Turiaf Orugix."

"You are trifling with me," said Nychol with a shrug. "I know very well that you're the one. More than that," he added, unrelentingly, "you were not Turiaf Orugix to your brother yesterday, and you are only Turiaf Musdæmon to him to-day."

"My brother, my brother!" the miserable man reiterated; "well, wait till to-morrow! The grand chancellor cannot have given the order for my death. 'Tis some frightful mistake. The Count of Ahlefeld is very fond of me. I beseech you, my dear Nychol, spare my life! I shall soon be restored to favor, and I will render you all the service" —

"You can only render me one, Turiaf," the hangman interrupted. "I have already lost the two executions that I counted on most, — those of the ex-chancellor Schumacker and the viceroy's son. I'm always in bad luck. You and Hans of Iceland are all that remain to me. Your execution, being nocturnal and secret, will only bring me in twelve gold ducats. Give me, then, as little trouble as possible; that's the only service that I want from you."

"O God!" said the condemned man piteously.

"It will be the first and the last, of a truth; but by way of compensation I promise you that you shall not suffer. I'll hang you in brotherly fashion. Don't make a fuss."

Musdæmon stood erect, his nostrils were puffed out with rage, his greenish lips trembled, his teeth chattered, and his mouth was foaming with despair.

"Satan! I would have saved Ahlefeld, I would have embraced my brother, and they put me to death! I must die to-night, in an obscure dungeon, where my curses will be unheard, from whence my voice cannot sound their infamy from one end of the kingdom to the other, from whence my hand cannot tear away the veil that hides their crimes! To come to this death I have defiled my whole life! Scoundrel," he went on, addressing his brother, "do you want to be a fratricide?"

"I'm the hangman," the phlegmatic Nychol responded.

"No!" the prisoner shouted, throwing himself upon the executioner, his eyes gleaming and shedding tears, like a bull at bay. "No, I'll not die in this way! I've not lived like a terror-inspiring serpent to be crushed like a miserable worm! I will give up my life with my last bite, but it shall be deadly."

Saying this, he clutched like an enemy the man whom he had just been embracing as a brother. At that moment, the flattering, smooth-tongued Musdæmon showed himself as he really was. Despair had stirred his soul to the dregs. Like a tiger he had crouched, and like a tiger he made his spring. It would have been difficult to decide which of the two brothers was the more terrifying, as they struggled together, — one with the dull ferocity of a wild beast, the other with the adroit fury of a demon. The four halberdiers, who hitherto had remained passive, now came to the assistance of the hangman; and in a few moments Musdæmon, whose only strength was in his wrath, was constrained to loosen his hold. He threw himself face foremost against the wall, uttering inarticulate cries, and scraping his nails against the stones.

"To die, by all the devils in hell, to die, and my shrieks cannot pierce these walls, or my arms overturn them!"

They took hold of him without encountering any resistance. His futile struggle had exhausted him. They pulled off his robe to bind him, and a sealed packet fell from his clothing.

"What's that?" asked the executioner.

A ray of infernal hope gleamed in the prisoner's haggard eyes.

"How did I come to forget that?" he murmured. "Listen, brother Nychol," he added, in an almost friendly tone; "these papers belong to the grand chancellor. Promise me to give them to him, and then do with me what you will."

"As you are quiet now, I promise to carry out your last wishes, although you behaved toward me in a most unbrotherly way. The papers will be given to the chancellor, upon the honor of Orugix."

"Ask to give them to him yourself," the condemned man went on, smiling at the executioner, who was not very familiar with smiles on such occasions. "The pleasure that they will give his grace will perhaps earn for you some favor."

"Is that true, brother?" said Orugix; "many thanks. Perhaps a commission as royal executioner will come of it. Well, let's part good friends. I'll forgive you for the digs you gave me with your finger nails; pardon me for the rope collar I'm going to put about your neck."

"'Twas another kind of collar the chancellor promised me," Musdæmon responded.

Then the halberdiers led him to the middle of the dungeon, and the executioner put the fatal slipnoose about his neck.

"Turiaf, are you ready?"

"One moment, one moment!" said the prisoner, his terror coming back again; "for pity's sake, brother, don't tighten the rope till I tell you."

"I shall have no need to tighten the rope," the executioner responded. And in a moment he repeated his question, "Are you ready?"

“One moment more. Alas, so I must die !”

“Turiaf, I can’t wait any longer.” Saying this, Orugix motioned to the halberdiers to move away from the prisoner.

“One word more, brother ; do not forget to give the packet to the Count of Ahlefeld.”

“Be easy about that,” the brother responded, and for the third time inquired, “Well, are you ready ?”

The unfortunate man opened his mouth, perhaps to beg for one moment more of life, when the impatient hangman stooped down. He turned a copper button fastened in the floor. The planks fell away from under the victim, and he disappeared through a square trap-door, while the rope made a dull, rustling sound, and then suddenly became taut, and vibrated violently with the last convulsions of the dying man. Nothing could be seen through the gloomy opening but the straining rope, but up through the floor came a blast of wind and a noise like that of rushing water.

Even the halberdiers drew back in horror. The hangman approached the opening, seized the rope, which was still swaying from side to side, and let himself down part way into the abyss, resting his two feet on the victim’s shoulders. The rope stretched out with a raucus sound and became motionless. A stifled sigh floated up through the trap-door.

“That’s good,” said the hangman, climbing up again into the dungeon. “Farewell, brother !” He took a knife from his belt. “Go feed the fishes in the bay. Your body goes into the water, and your soul into the fires of hell.”

With these words, he cut the straining rope. The part that remained fast to the iron ring snapped back against the ceiling, and they heard the splash of a falling body, as the deep, dark water spurted up from below, and then went on its subterranean course to the bay. The executioner closed the trap and made it fast, and as he rose to his feet he saw that the dungeon was full of smoke.

“What’s this ?” he asked the halberdiers ; “where does this smoke come from ?”

They knew no more about it than he did, and in their surprise they opened the dungeon door. The prison corridors were also filled with a thick and nauseating vapor. Through a secret passage-way they emerged in great alarm into the square court-yard, where a terrifying spectacle awaited them. A raging fire, driven to fury by the violent east wind, was destroying the military prison and the arquebusiers' barracks. The flames swept in giddy whirls over the stone walls, leaped from the glowing roof, and darted like tongues from the broken windows. The gloomy towers of Munckholm stood out clearly at one moment in the reddish glare, and then disappeared in the thick clouds of smoke. A turnkey, who rushed into the court-yard, told them in a few words that the fire had started in Hans of Iceland's dungeon, while the guards were asleep.

"Just my luck!" exclaimed Orugix, when he heard this; "probably Hans of Iceland has escaped me too! The villain will be burned, and I sha'n't even get the body that I paid two ducats for!"

Meanwhile the unfortunate Munckholm arquebusiers, suddenly awakened by the peril of death, rushed in a crowd to the main door, which through evil chance had been barricaded. Those outside could hear their cries of agony and distress, and could see them wringing their hands at the blazing windows, or springing out upon the court-yard pavement, evading one mode of death to find it in another. The triumphant flames pervaded the whole structure before the remainder of the garrison had time to come to the rescue. Efforts at succor were already useless. Fortunately the building stood by itself. They tried to break in the main door with axes, but it was too late; for at the very moment when it gave way, the burning roof timbers fell upon the unfortunate soldiers with a thundering sound, dragging the partitions and burning floors in its downfall. The entire building vanished from sight in a whirlwind of sparks and smoke, and only a few feeble cries indicated the fate of the victims.

The next morning all that remained in the square courtyard were four tall, blackened, heated walls, enclosing a horrifying mass of smoking ruins, where the fire still smouldered. When the place became cool enough, they began to dig. Under a layer of stones, timbers, and twisted ironwork, they found a heap of whitened bones and disfigured corpses; with thirty soldiers, for the most part crippled, this was all that remained of the dashing Munckholm regiment.

When, in their exploration of the ruins, they came to the ill-fated dungeon where Hans of Iceland had been confined, and whence the fire had started, they found the remains of a human body, lying upon pieces of broken chain near an iron brazier. It was noticed as a curious fact that two skulls were discovered there, although there was but one skeleton.

CHAPTER LI.

Saladin. Bravo, Ibrahim; thou art indeed a bearer of joyful tidings. I thank thee for thy good news.

The Mameluke. Well, is there nothing more?

Saladin. What dost thou expect?

The Mameluke. Nothing but this for the bearer of good tidings?

LESSING: *Nathan the Wise.*

THE Count of Ahlefeld paced to and fro in his apartment, clinching in his hands a package of letters that he had just been looking through, and stamping on the polished marble floor and the gold-fringed rug. His countenance was pale and anxious. At the other side of the room stood Nychol Orugix in an attitude of profound respect, wearing his infamous red clothes, and with his felt hat in his hand.

“You have indeed done me a service, Musdæmon,” the chancellor muttered angrily, between his set teeth. “Is his grace satisfied?” inquired the hangman in dull embarrassment.

“What is it that you want?” said the chancellor, turning upon him roughly.

The hangman smiled hopefully, in his pride at having attracted the chancellor’s attention.

“What is it I want, your grace? The position of executioner at Copenhagen, if your grace will deign to bestow this great favor in return for the good news I bring.”

The chancellor summoned two halberdiers, who were on guard at the door to his apartment.

“Put this scoundrel under arrest,” he said; “he has the insolence to mock at me!”

The two guards dragged the astounded and stupefied Nychol away, while he sought to make another appeal, —

“My lord ” —

“You are no longer executioner for Drontheimhus; I cancel your commission,” the chancellor responded, slamming the door violently.

The chancellor seized the letters again, and read them over and over in rage, inebriated as it were with his own dishonor; for the letters were the countess's correspondence with Musdœmon. The writing was Elphega's. He saw that Ulrica was not his daughter, and that Frederic, whom he had so deeply mourned for, had perhaps not been his son. The unhappy count was wounded in the pride which had been the cause of all his crimes. It was not a serious matter to see vengeance escape from under his hand; but he beheld all his ambitious dreams shattered, his past dishonored, his future annihilated. He had tried to ruin his enemies; he had only succeeded in destroying his own good name, in putting an end to his confidential adviser, and in sacrificing his rights as husband and father.

He desired at least to have one more interview with the miserable creature who had betrayed him. He hurried through the great rooms with eager tread, holding the letters in his hands, as if they were a thunderbolt. With furious rage he tore open the door to Elphega's apartment, and entered. His guilty spouse had just been suddenly informed by Colonel Vœthaün of her son Frederic's horrible death. The poor mother had gone mad.

CONCLUSION.

What I said by way of jest, you have taken seriously. — *Spanish Romances : King Alphonzo to Bernard.*

For a fortnight the events that we have just been narrating were the exclusive theme of conversation in Drontheim and Drontheimhus, public opinion varying, according to the different points of view from which the subject was regarded. The populace, who had waited in vain for the spectacle of seven successive executions, was in despair at being deprived of so much pleasure; the half-blind old women were still relating how, on the night of the deplorable destruction of the barracks, they had seen Hans of Iceland flying away on a spurt of flame, laughing at the conflagration, and kicking in the burning roof upon the Munckholm arquebusiers. Then, after an absence which had seemed very long to Ethel, Ordener reappeared at the Lion of Schleswig donjon, accompanied by General Levin de Knud and Athanasius Munder, the chaplain. At that moment Schumacker was walking in the garden, leaning on his daughter's arm. The two young people with difficulty refrained from rushing to a mutual embrace, but they were forced to content themselves with a look. Schumacker pressed Ordener's hand affectionately, and saluted the two strangers with every evidence of good will.

"Young man," said the old prisoner, "may Heaven's blessing rest on your return!"

"My lord," Ordener responded, "I have just arrived. I have seen my father at Bergen, and I have come to greet my father at Drontheim."

"What do you mean?" the old man inquired with astonishment.

"That you will give me your daughter, my lord."

"My daughter!" the prisoner exclaimed, turning towards Ethel, who was blushing and trembling.

"Yes, my lord; I love your Ethel. To her I have consecrated my life, and she is mine."

"You are a noble and worthy young man, my son," said Schumacker with a gloomy face; "and although your father did me much harm, I pardon him, out of regard for you, and I would willingly approve of this alliance; but there is one obstacle."

"And that, my lord?" Ordener asked uneasily.

"You love my daughter, but are you sure that she loves you?" The two young people looked at each other in mute surprise. "Yes," the father went on, "I'm sorry for it, for you are dear to me, and I should be glad to call you my son; it is my daughter who opposes the idea. She declared her aversion to you quite recently. While you were away she kept silent when I spoke of you, and seemed to wish to keep you out of her thoughts, as if she couldn't bear to have you in memory. You must therefore renounce your love, Ordener — fortunately one can cure one's self of loving, as one can of hating."

"My lord!" said Ordener in stupefaction.

"My father!" said Ethel, clasping her hands.

"Do not be alarmed, my daughter," the old man interrupted; "the marriage would be pleasing to me, but it is displeasing to you, and I do not wish to torture your heart, Ethel. You must know that in the last fortnight I am greatly changed. I shall not attempt to overcome your repugnance to Ordener. You are free."

"Indeed she is not," said Athanasius Munder with a smile.

"You are mistaken, my noble father," Ethel added audaciously; "I do not hate Ordener."

"What!" her father exclaimed.

"I am" — Ethel responded; then she faltered.

"She is my wife, father," said Ordener, kneeling before

the old man. "Pardon me, as my other father has already pardoned me, and give your children your blessing."

It was Schumacker's turn to be astonished; but the old man gave his blessing to the young people, as they knelt before him.

"I have had so many occasions for cursing in my life," he said, "that I seize every opportunity for a blessing, without any questions. But I shall be glad if you will explain to me."

Everything was explained to him. He shed tears of gratitude and affection.

"I am old, and I believed myself wise, and I could not read a young girl's heart!"

"So I may call myself by Ordener Guldenlew's name!" said Ethel with childish delight.

"Ordener Guldenlew," said old Schumacker, "you are a better man than I; for in the days of my prosperity I certainly would not have stooped from my position to unite myself to the daughter of a poor and disgraced prisoner."

The general seized Schumacker's hand, and gave him a roll of parchments, saying, —

"Do not speak in that way, my lord count. Here are your titles, which the king was sending to you by Dispolsen. His majesty joins with them the gift of pardon and liberty. This is the dower of your daughter, the Countess Danneskiold."

"Pardon! Liberty!" Ethel repeated in ecstasy.

"Countess of Danneskiold!" her father added.

"Yes, count," the general went on; "you will resume all your honors, and all your riches are restored to you."

"To whom do I owe all this?" the happy Schumacker demanded.

"To General Levin de Knud," responded Ordener.

"Levin de Knud! Did I not tell you, governor, that Levin de Knud is the best man living? But why did he not come in person to witness my happiness? Where is he?"

"He is here!" said Ordener, pointing in astonishment to the general, who was smiling amid his tears.

The reunion of the two old friends was indeed a touching spectacle. Schumacker's heart had been melted at last. When he came to know Hans of Iceland, he had ceased to hate mankind; when he came to know Ordener and Levin, hatred was transformed to love.

An elaborate and charming festal celebration soon followed the sombre marriage in the dungeon. Life began to smile on the two young people, who themselves had smiled in facing death. The Count of Ahlefeld beheld their happiness, and it was his most cruel punishment. Athanasius Munder also saw his fondest wishes realized. He obtained pardon for the twelve convicts; and Ordener extended the decree to his former comrades in misfortune, — Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith, who returned with joy to their homes, and announced to the pacified miners that the king had released them from guardianship.

Schumacker did not long survive the marriage of Ethel and Ordener; liberty and happiness were too sweet to be endured, and his soul went to seek liberty and happiness elsewhere. He died in that same year of 1699, and grief at his loss served to teach his children that perfect felicity does not exist upon this earth. His tomb was made in the church at Veer, — an estate owned by his son-in-law in Jutland, — and all the titles that had been taken from him in his captivity were recorded over his grave. From the alliance of Ordener and Ethel sprang the family of the counts of Danneskiold.

